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# JOHN MACKLIN

# A LOOK THROUGH SECRET DOORS

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"Is a ghost doomed to haunt forever the scene of its death? Or perhaps the place where something significant happened during its life in this world? These are usually assumed to be the reasons for most manifestations. Yet recently, I have been wondering if a spirit—especially an evil one—can attach itself to a group of people and follow them wherever they go. This is the remarkable theory that poses itself in connection with a psychical investigation I carried out a few years ago."

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# A LOOK THROUGH SECRET DOORS

## JOHN MACKLIN

AN ACE BOOK

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## THE HAUNTED FISH TANK

Is a ghost doomed to haunt forever the scene of its death? Or perhaps the place where something significant happened during its life in this world? These are usually assumed to be the reasons for most manifestations. Yet recently, I have been wondering if a spirit—especially an evil one—can attach itself to a group of people and follow them wherever they go. This is the remarkable theory that poses itself in connection with a psychical investigation I carried out a few years ago when the Tandy family found themselves being persecuted by a malevolent spirit which seemed determined to pursue them to the furthest ends of the Earth.

My introduction to this case came in the summer of 1965, when I received a letter from Michael Tandy, outlining this most curious ghost. Michael contacted me through my British publishers after reading one of my occult books, and was certain that his ghost would interest me. He was quite right.

It all began two years earlier, when the Tandys had been living in Berkshire. Michael, who was a schoolmaster, had been teaching at a famous public school a few miles from Reading. With his appointment, went a beautiful Georgian house in the school grounds. Large and roomy with about an acre of ground surrounding the house, it was perfect for a young man with a large family.

At first Michael and his wife, Ruth, were rather puzzled as to why such a magnificent house should have been allocated to a junior master, while several of the departmental heads lived some distance away in the town. But until the strange incidents began, neither of them inquired too deeply into this anomaly.

One of Ruth's hobbies was keeping tropical fish and she had a large and very expensive tank made for her collection. It was over six feet long, about four feet wide and five feet deep. When it was full of water, it was so

heavy that it needed at least three men to lift it from its position in the fireplace.

They had been in their house at the school for several months before anything happened. Michael had been at the main school building rather late one evening just before Easter, attending a master's meeting to discuss the curriculum for the new term which was to begin after the holidays. Ruth was sitting in the livingroom reading—the children were asleep upstairs and she was curled up in an armchair.

Perhaps she dozed off. The next thing she remembered was glancing quickly round at the doorway with the feeling that somebody was standing there watching her. She had closed the door—she remembers that—but then, as she looked round, it was slowly closing. The next second she heard somebody walking softly across the hall and up the stairs towards the bedrooms. Naturally, she thought Michael had returned and when she called out to him, the feet paused for a moment and then continued to make their way slowly up the stairs.

Looking out of the livingroom door, she could *hear* them on the stairs—the fourth step from the top even *creaked* as it always did when anybody stepped on it—she could *see* the stairs clearly: there wasn't anybody there! Her first thought was that one of the children had woken up and was creeping about the house, but on dashing upstairs she found them both fast asleep. The uncanny feeling that she was not alone grew even stronger.

She was bending over young Michael's cot, when once again she felt that somebody was watching her. Somebody—or something—was standing in the open bedroom doorway . . . and suddenly she was afraid to turn round.

How long she remained like that, bending over Michael's cot, praying for the strength to ignore her uncanny feeling, she couldn't say. It felt like all eternity—and with each moment that passed her fear grew more and more intense because she knew without any doubt that it was an evil presence.

Suddenly, she heard the front door opening and other, familiar, footsteps crossed the hallway downstairs. She





heard her husband calling. Tearing herself away from the cot she almost stumbled downstairs, and collapsed—sobbing hysterically—into Michael's comforting arms. She gasped out the story to him and he listened understandingly, but later that night they discussed it. Michael's interpretation of the facts indicated that he believed it had been a dream. A nightmare.

But Ruth was certain it hadn't been. She didn't press the argument, however, and they both decided to forget it. Nothing was said about it to anybody, because at that time neither of them really knew what had happened. But the footsteps that Ruth had heard were significant—for they heralded the arrival of a spectre that was to drive the entire Tandy family to the very brink of madness.

The haunting started quietly enough. Several times Ruth "imagined" that she heard the footsteps again, that she was being "watched"—and it was such a frightening experience that it started affecting her health. Michael noticed this and began to worry, because neither he nor the children had noticed anything out of the ordinary.

His first inexplicable experience was connected with the large, heavy fish tank. One Saturday morning, shortly after Easter, Michael had been sitting in the livingroom correcting some essays. Ruth and the children had driven into Reading to do the weekend shopping and he was alone in the house. That was when *he* sensed that somebody else was in the house.

As he was bending over the papers, a coldness shuddered down the back of his neck. It was as if some one was standing behind him staring intently at him. At first he tried to ignore the feeling, believing that it was an unconscious association of ideas with his wife's experiences. But it became so overwhelming that he spun round quickly—and saw nobody. Yet he did see *something* that brought a gasp of surprise from his lips . . . the fish tank was sitting in the middle of the livingroom floor, a good three yards from its usual place.

Michael tried to lift it back into position, but he couldn't make it budge an inch. The weight of the tank, plus the water and the apparatus inside, must have been several hundred pounds. Of course, he was puzzled, but

his first instinct was to restore it to its normal position before Ruth returned. He rushed out into the front garden and called to several of the boys from the school he saw cycling down the lane. It took five strong teenagers and Michael to restore the tank to its usual place in the fireplace. Even then, a large quantity of water slopped over the sides, and spread quickly into the carpet.

The boys had gone and Michael was on his knees trying to mop up the mess when his wife came home. He just said that he had spilt some water, but he could see from Ruth's expression that she wondered what use he could have had for water in the livingroom. However, she asked no questions—not then, at least.

A few evenings later, Michael heard the footsteps for himself. Heavy, loud and firm, they clattered across the hallway and mounted the stairs leading up to the bedrooms. He stared at Ruth, and they both rushed out to investigate. Michael dashed upstairs after them—and actually passed them by. At the top of the stairs, he stared back at his wife. As he heard the ghost walking up towards him, a chill swept past him and the first faint foul odour filled his nostrils.

Within a few days, Michael had decided to report the matter to the school governors and request another house for his family, for a wave of terrifying poltergeist activity was sweeping through their lives.

Practically every morning the fish tank was moved halfway across the room. There was never any question of that. Besides, a drop of the water never stained the carpet—that only happened when Michael and Ruth struggled to push it back in place.

Then crockery began getting smashed mysteriously, in empty rooms when there was nobody present. The children's toys also suffered. It was when the ghost turned its attention to the children—four-year-old Michael and eight-year-old Deborah—that the terror started in grim earnestness.

When the children were sleeping, the ghost went berserk and hurled books, ornaments, dishes and furniture all around the house, smashing everything it possibly could. One evening in June, Ruth was suddenly sent





hurtling down the stairs into the hallway, as something pushed her violently from behind.

Mysterious knockings and moans began to keep them awake at night, but the most horrible experience came when the stench Michael had sensed some weeks earlier became so overpowering that one morning just before dawn, Ruth and he were suddenly awakened, almost choking with the fumes.

Thinking that it might have been a gas leak, they dashed from their bedroom and then heard Deborah screaming. Debbie came rushing out from the nursery crying that a "nasty old man was being naughty. He was hurting Michael . . ."

Mr. Tandy dashed into the room and reeled back in horror at what he saw. Some unseen thing was forcing the pillow down on the child's face. It was clearly evident that hands were gripping it, for the finger marks could be seen and the pillow was crumpled by the hands that held it!

A muffled moan from the bed shook Michael Tandy into action. Springing forward he struggled to wrench the pillow from his son's face. As he did so, the stench swept across him, into his mouth and eyes and nose. He could taste it, and smell it, and it stung his eyes—he wanted to flee from the room, but the instinct to protect his child was the stronger of the two.

In a moment the terror had passed. The foul stink faded and Michael Tandy clutched his son in his arms, listening to the child's incoherent ramblings about a "bad dream." Yet it wasn't a dream. Of that the Tandys were convinced.

The very next day the house was abandoned and the Tandys moved into an hotel until another house could be found for them. Summer vacation wasn't far off, and the Rector of the school advised Michael to take his family back home to Ireland for the summer. Meanwhile, a psychical research team was called in by the Dean to investigate the manifestation. Apparently, the Tandys weren't the first people who had experienced the "ghost," which was why few of the other masters wanted the house. But they were the first to have been sub-

jected to such a reign of terror. Ireland seemed a welcome escape from all the recent horror.

For such a long stay at Michael's parents' modern villa near Newry, in County Down, Ruth had her tank of tropical fish shipped on ahead of them. When they arrived there, the tank was already installed in the spacious, centrally-heated lounge. At last, everything—the horror and the fear—was all behind them. Or so they thought.

But the first thing Joe Tandy, Michael's father, said when he was driving them from the station, was that something quite incredible had happened. A few days earlier, when the tank arrived, the van driver and his companion helped him place the tank on a stout table in the sunroom. Afterwards the workmen had joined Mr. Tandy, senior, and his wife for a coffee in the kitchen. There was nobody else in the house—and no way into the sunroom, except by walking through the kitchen.

As soon as the vanmen left, Tandy went to inspect the tank—it had been carefully placed on the floor . . . without a single drop of water being spilled! When Ruth heard that she fainted.

That very night the four adults—Michael, his wife, mother and father—heard a shuffling noise in the drive outside of the house. At first they thought that somebody was prowling about in the darkness, but there was nobody to be seen when Michael opened the door and looked out. As he closed the door, he sensed that something had swept past him. A familiar, rank odour enveloped him for a second and as he turned to stare at the others, before they could say anything, they all heard the firm, sinister phantom footsteps crossing the hallway. The ghost from Berkshire had arrived in Ireland! It had *followed* them!

Michael and his father ran towards the children's bedroom. Opening the door, they were just in time to see something pulling the pillow from beneath Deborah's head. For a second it poised above her face, then as the two men sprang forward, the pillow fell softly to the floor. The child slept on undisturbed.

For the next few days the now familiar poltergeist activities broke out all around Michael's parent's house. An





around-the-clock watch was kept on the children to see that they came to no harm.

That was when Michael Tandy contacted me. But at the time I was working in Paris and it took several days before the letter reached me. As soon as I could, I flew to Belfast airport and from there went by road to Newry. The case of the Tandy Poltergeist intrigued me, and I was looking forward to investigating it. But unfortunately this was not to be. By the time I arrived there it was over. For two nights the ghost had not made itself felt, but on the third night, June 5, the most frenzied poltergeist outbreak the Tandys had ever experienced took place. It was as if an already enraged spirit had gone berserk. Almost every piece of furniture in the house was wrecked in the presence of the four Tandys, a local journalist and a padre, who was also a member of a psychical research society. None of those present had ever seen such uncanny violence, and the rancid stink became so unbearable that the entire family fled to spend the night with some neighbours. But that appeared to have been the poltergeist's last stand . . . and, somehow, I don't think it was just because John Macklin was arriving. There was another explanation.

At the school house near Reading, where it had all started, workmen had been called in to investigate the panelling and pry beneath the floor looking for a simple and logical explanation. Did they find one?

Well, they did find something. Beneath the floorboards of the pantry which was beneath the staircase lay a pile of human bones. They only formed part of a skeleton and they were at least 150 years old. Whose bones they were, what they were doing there, and where the rest of the body had been disposed of, nobody has ever discovered.

In one final, exhibition of vindictiveness, the poltergeist turned its attention to the fish tank again. When the Tandys and the other observers had left the house, the tank was picked up from the table—it was a *heavy* tank, one that required several grown men to lift it and it was smashed on the floor. All the fish died.

## THE WOMAN WHO WAS HAUNTED BY OWLS

Sometimes when I'm working late at night in my study, I hear a sound in the darkness outside which, in spite of myself, makes me shudder with apprehension. There is nothing supernatural about the noise or its origins: it's only the mournful cry of an owl. And yet it is sufficient to remind me of the role two such creatures played in what might possibly prove to be the most macabre experience I have ever come across. I am still not satisfied that I know everything that happened to Michael Hardwick and his wife, Mollie . . . especially to Mollie.

She was certainly not a nervous woman, but right from the first few weeks she and her husband moved into the remote farmhouse in Cornwall, Mollie felt there was something wrong. At first she decided that it was simply the strangeness of a new house that had sheltered generations of farmers for many hundreds of years. A house retains *something* of the personalities of those who had lived there before, of that Mollie felt certain. She hoped that it wouldn't be too long before Tor Farm felt the influence of the Hardwicks. Once the place was redecorated and furnished to her liking, once it had become a home, then it might lose its uncanny atmosphere. But unfortunately, this was never to come about.

It was the owls that started Mollie's breakdown. Night after night, two of them would swoop down low over the farmhouse screeching angrily, as if they resented the newcomers. The "aerial attack" soon began to prey on her nerves, for it often would last all night long. Gradually the owls' cries took on a new and sinister sound. Mollie heard them as a threat to her peace of mind, as an almost *human* cry. No—to her they were *more* than human, they were the despairing cries of souls suffering in eternal damnation!

Of course, one can come up with a variety of explanations for Mollie's views. Medical reasons, psychia-





tric reasons and even simply emotional ones, sparked off by a colourful imagination. These might well provide the explanation, but there is at least one person who doesn't think so—and he is well qualified to give an opinion.

The case history of the Hardwick's and the events that followed their arrival at Tor Farm have all been objectively studied by a clinically-minded physician and have been passed on by him to me. For the sake of the code of ethics which govern doctors in England, I am unable at this stage to reveal Martin's real name. I will only point out that we were at school together and have remained friends ever since. I shall call him Dr. Miller. He was often faintly amused at my interest in the occult and, with his cool, logical mind, he was usually able to find explanations for the things that seemed inexplicable to me. But the day came, not so long ago, when even he was baffled by the fates of Michael and Mollie Hardwick.

They had first seen the farmhouse in the spring of 1946. Mike had just left the Royal Air Force, where he had served as a bomber pilot during the war, and they were touring Cornwall on their long delayed "honeymoon," as war-time marriages had not allowed such idylls. As they drove high on the moor above Tregowath, they saw the farmhouse for the first time, displaying a "for sale" sign. It had a thatched roof and white cob walls and, although it was in a bad state of repair, they both felt instinctively that there was no other house in this world that they would rather live in.

With a small legacy left him by an aunt, plus his gratuity payment, Mike bought the farmhouse and the six acres of land that went with it. After five years at war, Mike felt that he wanted nothing as much as peace and he was sure that this isolated farmhouse above Tregowath was where he would find it.

They had only been there for about a week when Mollie first noticed the two owls. From then on she saw them every evening and heard them every night. Sometimes, when they seemed to be screeching just outside her bedroom window, they kept her awake and, for a

reason that she could not explain, she became frightened of these winged creatures.

One night she woke up to hear what sounded like the tapping of a branch being blown against the window panes by wind. But Mollie knew it couldn't be that, for there was no branch near the window. She glanced at Mike, who was sleeping peacefully. She got up and went to the window. Drawing back the curtains, she peered out. A young man and a young woman were looking in at her, their hands outstretched, and tapping gently at the window as if seeking admission. For a split second, possibly because she had just been wakened from sleep, Mollie saw nothing strange in this. Then with horror she remembered that the bedroom was twenty feet above the ground and the wan-faced strangers were hovering in the air like birds!

Her terrified scream brought Mike to her side instantly. She pointed out of the window, but when he opened it and looked out all he could see were the two owls, flying silently away across the farmyard.

At the top of the winding lane which led from the farmhouse was an abandoned tin mine, and it was here, in a building which had once served as the office, that the Hardwick's nearest neighbour lived—an old recluse named Tom Molland. Nobody knew much about Tom. He had appeared one day early in the war, taken up residence in the old buildings and, from that time on, had kept very much to himself. Mollie and Mike had passed the time of day with him once or twice, but he had not seemed very sociable. She was very surprised one day when she went to the door and found Molland standing there.

When he left her a few moments later, Mollie was so frightened by what the hermit had told her, that she ran across the fields to where Mike was working. He listened incredulously as Mollie repeated what Tom had said.

Apparently many years before, the owner of Tor Farm had killed his wife and her lover and then committed suicide. Since then, Molland had claimed, the young wife and her lover kept returning to the farmhouse, reincarnated in some animal form. "They're just waiting for





the day when a man and woman die here," Tom had said. "Then they'll take over their bodies . . ."

"The old man's mad," was Mike's summing up. But Mollie wasn't so sure.

"He says that no one has died in the farmhouse, but when they do the young couple will be released." She said slowly. "They are the owls, Tom Molland thinks the same: *They are the owls . . . !*"

It was at this stage of the story that I first heard about it from "Martin Miller" who was practising in Tregowath. He treated Mollie for a serious nervous condition soon after the event which I have just described, and the full story, as I have reported it, was revealed to him. I was impressed by the calm, methodical way Martin related the facts to me, although I had to confess that "haunting" by reincarnated bodies was something I had not really investigated. This particular form of manifestation is believed to occur in both India and Tibet.

What puzzled both Martin and myself at that time was what part old Tom Molland played in this strange tale. Was he mad—had he made up the story to frighten Mollie and her husband? Was he possessed of strong psychic or spiritualist powers, or was he involved in the matter even more directly?

An idea was forming in the back of my mind which I did not mention at that moment, but inwardly I was afraid that Mollie and Mike Hardwick were in a position of extreme danger.

I saw Martin three weeks later. He had driven all the way to London especially to see me, and he had hardly set his foot inside my door than he began to tell me the events of the past weeks. In all my experiences with the supernatural and the paranormal I had never heard such an incredible or terrifying tale. This is the story Martin gave me.

"As you know I was treating Mollie Hardwick for severe nervous tension caused by this unusual fear of owls. I visited her twice a day—my first visit in the morning and my final one in the evenings about seven o'clock. On each occasion I gave her a sedative. Despite this, however, her condition deteriorated and I recommended that she should be transferred to hospital. Un-

fortunately, Mike would not agree, as he was sure she would recover.

"But she didn't . . . her condition became worse and worse, her nervous tension driving her to a state of near insanity. Continually she would harp on the owls and the story Molland had told her. 'The owls . . . they want release, they want release," she would mutter again and again, and then she would add, almost as if to herself, 'They're waiting for *our bodies . . .*'

"I tried to tell her that she was letting her imagination run away with her. Her husband also tried to reason with her, and said that he would shoot the owls. But this made Mollie completely hysterical, and she said that if he did, she was sure they would both die, also.

"In the end, I recommended to Mike that, for the sake of her sanity, it would be better if they left the farm. But he would not let a couple of owls drive *him* away. And he refused to discuss the matter any further.

"I also tried to get Tom Molland to tell Mollie that he had made the story up. But when I put this to him he simply replied: 'What I says is true.' And nothing I could do would get him to change his mind.

"Two days later, something happened that I shall never forget as long as I live. In the evening my telephone rang. It was Mike. He was very upset and asked me to go to them at once.

"Apparently, he had returned to the house and, to his horror, the two owls had flown in through the open window, and were attacking Mollie. They were clawing at her face with their talons and trying to peck at her eyes. Mike beat them off, but they escaped through the window. Mollie's face was badly injured, and she was in such a state of terror that she was almost out of her mind.

"Within twenty minutes I was at the farmhouse, determined to get Mollie to hospital. Mike had put her to bed with a strong sedative before phoning me, but it was obvious that her face and eyes needed urgent surgical attention. I told Mike not to leave her alone, and I went back to my car to drive up the lane to the phone box to call the ambulance.

"As I drove along, my headlights picked out Tom





Molland's figure huddled in the hedge. He appeared to be watching the farmhouse. As I drew level with him I slowed down and called out: 'What do you know of all this you old devil?'

"He looked at me with a strange smile on his lips. 'I always speak the truth,' he said evenly. Then he disappeared into the darkness, leaving me with the feeling that within Molland there was something evil and sinister.

"I had travelled no more than half the return journey from the call box, when I saw the red glow licking into the sky. I knew at once that it was coming from Tor Farm.

"As I entered the farmyard, the old building, with its thatched roof and timber framed walls, was burning so fiercely that nobody could do anything to save it. As I ran for the front door, I saw the dim shape of Mike come lurching through the smoke and flames. In his arms he was carrying Mollie.

"I ran towards him. His clothes were alight and his face and body were black with the effect of the heat. I tore off my overcoat and threw it over him to quell the flames. At the same time, I dragged them as far from the building as I could, and then Mike collapsed.

"They were both completely unconscious and, by the light of the inferno, I could see that they were both suffering from the effects of the smoke and very severe third degree burns. Mollie's face was burned beyond all recognition and Mike's legs were burned so badly that in parts the blackened bone was visible.

"I could see no possibility of either of them surviving and it was with this thought in mind, that I tried to feel their pulse points. Both were alive at that moment. Their pulse beats were very weak, but they were certainly alive. All I could do was pray that the ambulance I had sent for would arrive quickly.

"A terrible scream, like that of a human in pain, suddenly rang out from the direction of the farmhouse. Whirling above the blazing building were the two owls, diving and soaring, just keeping out of reach of the tongues of fire.

"Then as I watched, they flew slowly and deliberately

into the flames. It was at that very moment I realised that the pulse beats beneath my fingers had stopped. Mollie and Mike Hardwick were dead.

"I ran to my car to fetch my stethoscope. I pressed it first against one chest and then the other. There was no doubt at all that they were both dead.

"The fire was beginning to burn itself out. I gave one last look at the still bodies beside my feet and turned once more to my car. I had almost reached it when I heard a strange, gasping noise.

"To my amazement, I saw that the bodies I had left for dead were *moving!* They were writhing about as if in a fit and all the time a gasping noise was issuing from their lips.

"I can tell you, John, that I honestly thought I was going mad. Yet I had the feeling that I was witnessing what few people ever have witnessed before: the taking over of a dead body by another spirit.

"I had no time to conjecture further on this incredible phenomena, for at that moment Tom Molland came looming through the darkness and before I could stop him he had hurled himself upon the writhing bodies and stabbed a knife first into one chest—and then the other. It happened so quickly that I didn't have time to move until the act was done. 'I'll never let them be,' he called out, dodging out of my reach. 'They'll never win, not with me. I'll kill them every time, you see if I don't.'

"With that he ran as hard as he could towards the house. He was laughing as he hurled himself deliberately to his death amongst the flames."

Martin sat back when he had finished his story and said quietly: "Make of it what you will, but I'm beginning to believe that I witnessed the incredible. What do you think?"

My mind was too numb with shock to think anything. Martin Miller certainly didn't believe in ghosts or anything occult. But his experience was one of the most fantastic I had ever heard. There was no opinion that I could offer then.

I have eventually perused the written report he sent me on the whole affair. I have checked out the facts as





far as I can and there is little doubt that it happened exactly as he said.

There was—and indeed, still *is*—a local legend about the owls that haunt Tor Farm. Hospital records and Martin's medical records verify Mollie Hardwick's illness and condition. As for Tom Molland, he was a man who had apparently come from nowhere, a strange man who had little to do with the local people in that district. A man who showed a more than normal interest in everything connected with Tor Farm from the very first day he arrived in Cornwall.

Who he was, how he knew the story about the double-murder and suicide, and why he feared and hated the owls I cannot yet explain. I am just as completely baffled about his reasons for killing Mollie and Michael Hardwick just when they were making a miraculous recovery after the fire. Perhaps, as has been suggested, he was a pathological killer. A madman. But then, that still doesn't explain why these two owls should have persecuted Mollie Hardwick, does it?

## THE BEAST OF GEVAUDAN

Throughout the entire Haute Loire region of France, the people walked in fear and barred their doors against the sinister evil that walked the land during the hours of darkness. The body of a young girl had been found on the edge of Mercoire Forest, a few miles from the town of Langogne . . . and she had literally been torn asunder. The wolf had struck again—and the news spread throughout the province like wildfire! It was whispered that the creature was a devil—that it was not of this Earth. That it was as big as a bull, with great, steel-like claws and pointed ears that resembled Satan's horns. It was reddish in colour, with a black stripe down its spine.

The wolf's first victim was a 14-year-old girl, whose throat was torn out by the creature on July 3, 1764. A week later, a second girl was killed. In August, the beast almost completely devoured a 15-year-old boy, and in

September, its victims included two girls, a woman and another boy. The killings all took place in a heavily-wooded area known as Le Gevaudan—and in each case the victim's heart was eaten.

By the end of September, the inhabitants of Le Gevaudan were in the grip of terror. They had never known anything like it; wolves attacked sheep, but rarely did they molest humans—and then only in the depths of the winter, when starvation made them desperate.

In response to a frantic plea by the mayor, forty dragoons arrived in Langogne. For several days they combed the woods of Le Gevaudan, without sighting the wolf. People began to breathe more easily. Perhaps the creature had been driven out of the area.

Then, on the first of October, a 12-year-old girl was attacked and savagely mutilated near her home in the neighbouring region of Saint-Chely d'Apchier. On October 7, two more girls were killed—followed by a young woman a week later.

The Governor of Languedoc issued orders forbidding women and children to work alone in the fields and organised a large-scale hunt for the beast. During the weeks that followed, soldiers and armed peasants killed more than 70 wolves but "the Beast" was not among them. The despairing people of Le Gevaudan were becoming more and more convinced that the creature was supernatural. Then heavy snow began to fall, putting an end to the search.

But the snow didn't deter the Beast. On December 15, it decapitated a 45-year-old woman in Auvergne. Five days later, a young girl suffered the same fate. On December 22, the Beast was pursued for half an hour by a troop of dragoons and, according to their report, it literally vanished before their eyes.

Then, on January 12, 1765, the Beast suffered its first defeat. Seven children—five boys and two girls—were guarding a flock of sheep near Villeret d'Apchier. Suddenly, they cried out in terror as they saw the great wolf loping towards them through the long grass, its razor-fanged mouth gaping.

The Beast leaped on one of the boys and began to drag him off. The others gave chase, stabbing at the





creature with improvised spears made from knives lashed to the ends of staves. The Beast dropped its first victim—who was badly torn about the face, but still alive—and seized another boy by the arm.

Led by 12-year-old Andre Portefaix, the others rushed the creature again, trying to stab it in the eyes. One of them thrust his spear between the Beast's gaping jaws, forcing it to release its hold. Portefaix cried: "Save him—or die with him!" and stood over the fallen boy, fending off the creature with all his strength. At last, bleeding from several deep gashes, the wolf turned tail and fled.

When Louis XV heard of Andre Portefaix's bravery, he rewarded the boy by paying for his education out of the royal purse. Later, Portefaix became an artillery officer.

However, the people's jubilation was short-lived, for the next day, as though enraged by its defeat, the Beast killed another boy. A few hours later, the child's grief-stricken parents—weeping in their home—were horrified to see the Beast peering in through the window—its eyes glowing red and an expression of satanic evil on its face. After several long minutes, the creature vanished in the gathering darkness.

By the end of January, the Beast had claimed four more victims. A fabulous price was placed on the Beast's head; the King promised 6,000 livres to the person who killed it, the states of Languedoc raised 2,000, the Bishop of Mende 1,000 and various syndicates put up a further 1,000.

On February 7, 1765, twenty thousand men—everyone who was able to carry a weapon—converged on Mont-Grand, where the Beast had last been seen. A troop of dragoons flushed the creature out of its hiding-place and drove it towards the Truyere river, where it was to have been trapped by a strong force of peasants. Unfortunately, the peasants had gone to the wrong place and the Beast swam the river and vanished in the woods on the other side.

It was sighted again an hour later, and was bowled over by a volley of musket-fire. But scrambling to its feet again, it loped off into the forest. The hunters however, were certain that they wounded it—probably fatally. No

creature of flesh and blood could have survived such a blast of musket-balls. Exhausted, the hunters called off the chase.

Less than twenty-four hours later, the Beast decapitated another girl. *And there were no tracks in the snow around the body.*

The superstitious people of Languedoc were completely resigned to the belief that the Beast was an instrument of the Devil and that no mortal man had the power to destroy it. To make matters worse, the church stepped in and declared that the wolf had been sent by God to punish the peasants for their sins. A dark aura of gloom hung over the whole land. People went about their tasks furtively, in constant fear, gripped by a deadly fatalism.

Meanwhile, in March, the Beast killed eight more people. On April 7, after months of fruitless searching, the dragoons rode away from Langogne. As though to celebrate the occasion, the Beast ripped out the throat of a 17-year-old shepherdess. On April 30—after claiming three more victims—the Beast was shot twice in the flank by a hunter near Saint-Alban. It escaped, leaving a great pool of blood behind it, but just a few hours later it killed a 40-year-old woman.

The Beast grew bolder, prowling along village streets after dark and snarling at barred doors. People whispered that it often walked upright on its hind legs, like a man, and now a fearful name sped from lip to lip—a name that no one had dared to utter until now. Werewolf!

Then, in May, came fresh hope. For nearly three weeks, there was no new killing. Perhaps the Beast was mortal after all. Perhaps a musket-ball had found a vital spot. The hope was short-lived. On the evening of May 19, in Servilanges wood, the Beast struck down an elderly woman and devoured her heart. Then on Friday, May 24, the monster made up for its period of inactivity by killing no less than four people in one day. The reign of terror continued throughout June, when the wolf claimed several more victims within sight of their homes.

Meanwhile, King Louis was growing increasingly worried in case the peasant's terror flared into open revolt.





In July, he placed the Master of the Royal Hunt, Monsieur Antoine, in command of twenty guardsmen and ordered him to rid Gevaudan of the Beast—or die in the attempt.

The peasants may have been impressed by the colourful uniforms of Antoine and his guards; the Beast apparently was not. As dusk was falling on August 9, it killed a 16-year-old milkmaid under the very windows of the Chateau du Besset, where Antoine was staying.

Then a new and sensational rumour swept the countryside. The Beast was indeed a werewolf—and it was said that the man who possessed the evil ability to change into a savage animal had been captured. His name was Jean Chastel, and he lived the life of a hermit in the forest. It was small wonder that he tried to hide himself from the rest of the world, for he had once been a prisoner of the Moors in North Africa. They had tortured him and turned him into a warped, twisted caricature of a human being.

Chastel lived in a part of the forest where the Beast was known to lurk and Monsieur Antoine came upon him there one day. The man refused to answer any questions; instead, he gave an animal-like scream of fury and launched himself at the fine-clothed gentleman. Antoine's guards seized him and he spent the next few weeks in prison.

It was said that while Chastel was in prison, the savage killings stopped. Whether that was true or not, the fact remained that Chastel was released on September 1st—and the following day, the Beast tore a young girl to pieces. On September 9, the savagely-mutilated body of another girl was found, and two days later a mule-driver was attacked and killed on the road between Paulhac and Sauges. On September 13, a 12-year-old girl vanished completely; all the searchers found were her bonnet and clogs.

Monsieur Antoine sensed that disgrace was hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles. He had to act quickly, and the prospect of letting 10,000 livres slip through his fingers made him feel ill.

On September 17, some enormous crates containing hunting-dogs, arrived at the Chateau du Besset. The

following day, with the aid of the dogs and an army of foresters, he began to comb the woods for miles around. On the third day of the hunt, a huge wolf ambled out of the trees and eyed Antoine from a few yards' distance. Antoine promptly shot it through the head and transported the carcass on horseback to the Chateau du Besset, where it was inspected by several people who had seen, or who claimed to have seen, the Beast. They all agreed that it was the monster, and Antoine submitted a triumphant report to the King hinting that he had more than earned his reward.

The King ordered Antoine to bring the carcass to Versailles, and when he had seen it he declared—to the hunter's dismay—that although it was somewhat bigger than average, it was just an ordinary wolf for all that. Fuming, Antoine returned to Le Gevaudan, still claiming that the animal he had killed was the Beast. The peasants looked sideways at one another and kept out of his way. The atmosphere was electric; it was as though everyone was waiting for something to happen.

Antoine packed his bags and left Gevaudan for good—in disgrace—on November 3, and just a month later the Beast struck again. It attacked two shepherdesses, killing one of them. Unfortunately, there is no record of what transpired between King Louis and the Master of his Royal Hunt when the news reached Versailles, for Antoine disappeared.

Another girl was killed on December 10, and on December 21 the Beast devoured an 11-year-old named Agnes Mourgues. There was so little left of her that the parish priest thought it wasn't worthwhile burying the pitiful remains.

By this time, the people of Le Gevaudan were learning to live with the continued fear. But now they could no longer count on any help from the King. Louis didn't want to hear about the Beast's renewed onslaught. He washed his hands of the whole affair; as far as he was concerned the Beast was dead. He had the wolf that Antoine had killed stuffed and mounted in the "King's Cabinet," which later became the Natural History Museum in Paris. It stayed there until the beginning of this





century, when—having lost most of its fur—it was burned.

Meanwhile, the priests of the various parishes around Gevaudan put their heads together with the object of raising funds for more hunting expeditions—led, this time, by local noblemen. They, at least, would take care not to trample over crops; the dragoons and Antoine's men hadn't worried about minor details such as what the peasants were going to live on.

The man who volunteered to lead the hunt was the young Marquis d'Apchier. With a force of 90 men, he set out every Sunday morning to search the surrounding forest. But always, the party came back empty-handed.

On March 4, at dusk, the Beast attacked and killed nine-year-old Jean Bergounioux as he was driving his father's cows home for milking. Ten days later, eight-year-old Marie Bompard suffered the same fate in the wood of Liconesse.

As a desperate last resort, the Marquis d'Apchier ordered his men to slaughter dozens of dogs. The carcasses were poisoned and then scattered throughout the wood—but although many animals died a painful death as a result, the Beast was not among them. On April 17, it devoured a six-year-old girl near Clavieres, followed by a ten-year-old boy a few weeks later.

There is no record of any savage killing between June 4, 1766—when a young girl was decapitated—and the end of August of that same year. In fact, the Beast seemed to be growing tired of its fearsome activities; between September 1766 and March 1767, there was an average of only two killings per month.

Then, in March, 1767, came a brutal re-awakening. By the end of that bloody month, eight people had died—and all within the area of just one parish. The next month, the horror was repeated all over again, but in a different parish.

The people had tried every physical means of exterminating the Beast—and they had failed. The most familiar sound throughout Le Gevaudan for three years now had been the tolling of the funeral bell. In desperation, the people prayed for a miracle. For miles around they came flocking to two chapels, Notre-Dame-d'Estours

and Notre-Dame-de-Beaulieu, to pray to the Virgin Mary. It was like a minor crusade. The people seemed to be infused by a new spirit, a new courage. And on June 19, 1767, a small army advanced into the forest once more, grimly determined to pursue the Beast until either they or it dropped.

With them went Antoine Chastel, the father of Jean Chastel who had fled back into the heart of his woods to escape the savage vengeance of those who claimed that he was a half-man by day, and the Beast by night. Antoine Chastel prayed hard as he walked deeper into the forest, following the long line of beaters. He prayed that the awful dread in his heart would soon be lifted; that they would find the Beast, and kill it, and prove to the world that it was an animal of flesh and blood. But if not . . . As he walked, Antoine Chastel stroked the stock of the musket that he cradled in the crook of his arm—a musket that was charged with a very special ball. He had made it himself—out of silver.

Laboriously, the hunters worked their way up the eastern slope of Mont Mouchet, a mile or so from Auvers. Chastel dropped back a little way; he had a strange feeling that the Beast would attempt to outflank the beaters and make its escape behind their backs.

Reaching a broad clearing, Chastel sat down on a treestump and settled down to wait, leafing through the pages of his prayerbook. The noise of the hunt died away and an uncanny stillness fell over the woods. Suddenly, Chastel sensed that he was being watched. Looking up, he felt a thrill of excitement mixed with fear. At last, the time had come. Standing motionless on the edge of the clearing was the Beast.

Slowly, deliberately, Chastel closed his prayer-book and put it in his pocket. Then sinking to one knee, he raised his musket and took careful aim on the vulnerable spot just behind the wolf's left foreleg. The crash of the musket echoed deafeningly from the silent trees. When the smoke cleared, the Beast was lying on its side, the grass around it spattered with blood.

Cautiously, Chastel walked over and surveyed the creature. It was big all right—but not much bigger than an ordinary male wolf. The terrifying thing about it,





even in death, was that it exuded cruelty and ferocity. Its long jaws were requipped with 42 dagger-sharp teeth, teeth that were capable of removing a person's head in one bite. But Chastel was puzzled by the creature's body. It wasn't really the body of a wolf; the legs were too thick and the breast was too wide. Apart from that, the paws were elongated and were equipped with an extra talon. The creature's reddish fur was streaked with strange black bands, and there was a white, heart-shaped mark on the breast.

Today, two hundred years after Antoine Chastel's silver bullet put an end to the "wolf's" life, mystery still shrouds the true nature of the Beast of Gevaudan. Many people were convinced that the wolf shot by Chastel wasn't the Beast at all—but the fact remains that there were no more savage killings after June 19, 1767.

Just how many people were killed by the Beast during its three-year rampage will never be known for certain, but the parish records of the area quote at least 75. Added to this, there were thirty cases of serious injury and mutilation. Some witnesses maintained that the Beast, was, in fact, a werewolf. But if it was, it had nothing to do with Antoine Chastel's son, Jean. He turned up safe and sound a few days later, his name completely cleared.

The Beast may have been a mutation—a freak of nature that combined almost human cunning with an exceptionally strong body. That is one twentieth-century theory; another suggests that it was all a myth, invented by starving peasants in the hope of extracting money from their lords as a reward for hunting it down, and that the wolf killed by Chastel was just an ordinary member of its species.

Whatever the truth, old legends die hard in superstitious Languedoc—and the legend of the Beast that left its mark in blood across the land is no exception. They say that you can still see it today: that when the moon is full, a huge, grey spectre with eyes of fire, moves furtively through the trees on the slopes of Mont Mouchet. And on June 19, the anniversary of the creature's death, the doors in some of the remoter hamlets are kept barred.

## THE FACELESS LADY IN THE LAKE

The triumphant roar of a tiger was the only sound to break the silence that night sixty-five years ago. And when that had echoed away to nothing in the distant foothills, a few miles north of Almora, in India's north-west province, the sinister silence returned to that lake-side scene beneath the sickle moon.

The men waiting impatiently in a "hunter's hide" in the tree tops peered through the shadows and fingered their rifles. Neither of the European officers knew what they were supposed to be looking for, but the three Ghurkas accompanying them did because they had heard all about the spectre that lived in the lake from the local natives. And already one of their band—the brave Subadar Jagbir—had died.

Before the Ghurka had been killed in such mysterious circumstances, neither Captain Bruce Sandham nor his friend, Lieutenant Myers, had taken the rumours seriously. They had accounted for the dozens of killings as being caused by the Thugees, or some other similar secret society and they had left the job of investigating it all to the local authorities.

In fact, it had been from a local padre, the Reverend Gwn Griffiths, that they had first heard about the "ghost assassin." Myers and Sandham were serving with a Ghurka regiment in the north-west province and had left their barracks in Almora to spend a few days hunting about the foothills. Although the native troops were accompanying them officially as armed escorts and camp workers, the democracy that sprang from a profound respect, placed the other ranks on more or less an equal footing with their officers. So the Ghurka riflemen indulged in hunting themselves, when duty permitted.

Subadar Jagbir wanted to take home a crocodile skin trophy and two days after the expedition reached the jungle village, he had gone off with a few others towards a lake they had passed earlier that day. In the





entire regiment there were few men as brave as Jagbir, or as level-headed, or as skilled with a rifle. Nobody doubted that he would accomplish what he set out to do.

On the edge of the lake, the Ghurkas discovered the remains of what had formerly been a lavish palace, perhaps the stronghold of some forgotten Rajah. As Jagbir trekked along the edge of the lake to find himself a suitable crocodile, his comrades set up their camp in the courtyard. The rapidly gathering dusk had been falling and Jagbir didn't expect to be long.

As the other soldiers settled down round the camp fire they heard Jagbir's rifle ring out. He fired three times and then there was silence. As the rest of the night passed, the other Ghurkas waited for him to return, but the longer this became the more uneasy they felt. Had something happend to Jagbir? Had he missed? Had the hunter become the victim?

It certainly seemed that way, and in the morning his comrades set out to find him. They followed Jagbir's track through the jungle, from the camp site down to the lake, then they saw his footprints all along the shoreline. Suddenly it seemed as if Jagbir had walked out into the lake. A few yards further on they found his rifle, with three spent cartridges beside it, but there was no sign of Subadar Jagbir.

Thinking that their man had been murdered by some insurgents or bandits, the British officers with the party ordered an immediate search of the neighbourhood. It seemed unlikely that such a campaign veteran as Jagbir could have been killed in any other way. The villagers, however, were reluctant to discuss the matter. Captain Sandham saw this, and quite correctly put it down as fear—but a fear which he didn't then understand.

He went to discuss the matter with the incumbent missionary, a Welshman, Gwn Griffiths. In all sincerity the padre explained that the missing Ghurka had no doubt been strangled by the ghost "lady of the lake." At first Sandham thought the padre was pulling his leg, trying to see how naïve he was. But the Captain was no fool . . . he had been in India for over twenty years.

Griffiths wasn't either—but he certainly *wasn't* joking. He assured the officer of that, and neither did he

believe in ghosts. Yet what else could explain the mysterious deaths that had taken place by that jungle lake? In the past fifty years almost twenty men had died there in circumstances which made his mind boggle. Several had escaped with their lives, but most of those who had were too afraid to discuss the matter. Most of them, with one exception . . .

And even that man soon wished he hadn't told his story. He had been another British officer, and once his report became common knowledge the poor man became such a laughing stock that he had to resign his commission ignominiously and leave India. Griffiths knew the story well.

Apparently the officer in question, an Irishman named Fitzhughes, claimed that while camping on the grounds of the derelict palace one evening, he had become so interested in the rare trees that had been planted there, that he had gone for a stroll in the moonlight. His servants hadn't accompanied him as he hadn't been going very far.

Suddenly he heard footsteps behind him. Glancing round he saw one of the local guides ambling nervously along beside him. Fitzhughes wondered what the fellow was up to and waited for the man. To his surprise, Singh, the guide, was perspiring with fear, and when the officer asked him what was wrong, the native stammered something about that part of the garden being a "cursed place—a place of death . . ."

Fitzhughes would have burst out laughing at such a suggestion normally, but on this occasion he didn't. Singh's next words aroused his curiosity. The native claimed to have *seen* the ghost! "It was nothing *human*, sahib," he explained, "neither was it an animal. I could feel the evil beating over me like the winter winds from the distant mountains . . . as you value your life, sahib, don't go any further . . ."

The officer assured the native that he had no intention of going to meet the Devil or any of his demons, and watched Singh hurry back towards the comforting glow of the camp fire. Fitzhughes was just about to follow him, when he heard something moving in the undergrowth behind him. He spun around swiftly, one hand





snatching his revolver from his holster, and then he relaxed. For there was no evil spirit near him; instead he saw the face of a beautiful Indian girl smiling at him.

She held a cautioning finger to her lips, and beckoned him with the other. And, as Fitzhughes was a red-blooded Irish bachelor, he decided to go along with her. On and on she led him through the overgrown garden until they came to a gate in the wall. The girl slipped through the narrow opening with an agility that surprised Fitzhughes, for he had to wrench it open to follow her.

Inside was another courtyard, surrounded by high crumbling walls on three sides—on the fourth side was the lake. Poised on the rocks, Fitzhughes could see the slim shape of the girl. Suddenly she laughed back at him, and then plunged into the water. By the time he reached the shore there wasn't as much as a ripple to be seen, then there was a movement at his feet and an elegant slender arm reached up through the water towards him.

Bending down, he stretched out his hands to help her back onto the shore. Suddenly he was pulled forward as an icy hand clasped one wrist, then the hold was loosened and two powerful hands seized his throat. Fitzhughes tried to scream, as he felt the life ebbing away from him, but he couldn't move. He was on his knees; the blood was pounding in his head, the stars in the sky were reeling about in a blood red mist and the hands were still choking him when he heard a shout.

The next thing he remembered was the native Singh bending over him . . . trying to free the captain's hands from about his very own throat! Fitzhughes had almost choked himself! . . . a feat which any doctor will agree, is physically impossible. Yet the Irishman had almost succeeded.

Singh didn't say a word as he led the Captain back to the camp. But in the morning, when Fitzhughes staggered from his tent to freshen himself up, the only person moving about the camp was Singh. The others were still asleep. Singh's bare brown back was turned away from Fitzhughes as the Indian concentrated on preparing his meal. He didn't look round as the soldier pre-

pared to shave himself in the mirror. Tenderely Fitzhughes rubbed some ointment into the purple-red bruise on this throat.

Then he realised that Singh was standing behind him, slipping his jacket on. For a second, Fitzhughes saw the very same bruises on the guide's throat. Singh saw Fitzhughes staring at them—then he turned wordlessly away.

That was the story Captain Sandham heard some years later from the Reverend Griffiths. He listened to it incredulously and then asked the padre if he really believed such nonsense. Griffiths shrugged his shoulders. "I only know that I was chaplain in Fitzhughes' regiment and I saw the marks for myself. I was on the medical committee that met to decide whether or not he was thought fit to carry on with his commission.

"I didn't think so then. But since I left the regiment and became missionary here I have changed my mind. There were several men in the villages around here, who were walking around with the finger bruises on their throats. Yet none of them would say how they received the marks."

Sandham and Myers decided that the padre had been living too long among the "natives" to be a reliable witness, but at least they had some idea that something unusual had happened to Subadar Jagbir.

When the Ghurka troops informed them that none of the natives would go near the ruined palace at any price, it was decided that somebody was frightening them away. That, probably, Jagbir had stumbled across a band stronghold and had been murdered . . . so it was decided to lay an ambush for who ever "haunted" the palace.

But before they did, Jagbir's body was discovered floating in the lake and he had been strangled. The deeply pressed finger-marks about his throat testified to that. However, Myers and Sandham were even more certain that Jagbir had been murdered by bandits or insurgents and, if there had been any girl involved, she had been used as a decoy.

The ambush was set among the trees early that evening. Great care was taken to ensure that nobody knew what the two officers and the three Ghurka marksmen





were up to. The night seemed endless as they waited. It wasn't long before dawn and still nothing had happened; the British officers were just beginning to think that the murderers had been tipped off, when they heard a sound nearby in the undergrowth.

They gripped their weapons firmly in their hands and waited, the Ghurkas also drew their razor-sharp kukris. But nobody appeared. At a signal from Myers, they dropped silently from the "hide" and vanished into the shadows.

The two officers followed them, and the parties crept silently through the jungle after an elusive quarry. It was Myers and Sandham who glimpsed the figure darting swiftly into the ruined palace. They ran after it. Just outside of the gaping doorway they split up and Sandham raced on in the front, while Myers darted round to the side to prevent the culprit from escaping.

Sandham found himself in the remains of what had formerly been a spacious hall. Now there was no sign of another living soul. The thick dust showed many marks—of deer, hyenas and rats—but no human footprints. The person they had been pursuing couldn't have entered there after all, he thought, and turned reluctantly back into the courtyard. There was no signal from Myers; the night was silent, and the garden was deserted. And yet for some reason Sandham began to feel nervous, it was almost as if somebody was spying on him.

Suddenly he realised *why* he was nervous—he must be in the very courtyard Fitzhughes had wandered into that night so many years ago. Sure enough, Sandham saw the rocks, and the shoreline. Cocking his rifle, he crept cautiously forward and reached the rocks, then peered down into the weed-choked, murky waters of the lake. The water seemed lifeless, stagnant.

Then to his horror, a slender arm burst through the surface and reached towards him. He started back, but he was too late. It seized his tunic, then powerful fingers were cutting off his windpipe. Instinctively, he fired his rifle down at his attacker, the gun blasted twice—then dropped from nerveless fingers. The blood was roaring in his brain.

Lieutenant Myers and three Ghurka soldiers later testified that they had heard the sound of Sandham's rifle and raced immediately to the lakeside, where they found the Captain lying face downwards in deep water . . . with both his hands strangling himself. His grip was so powerful that one of the Ghurkas had to partially slash his wrists with a kukri to save the captain's life. And as they did so, Myers swore on oath that he had heard a scream. But it hadn't come from Sandham—it had come from the palace behind them.

Leaving two Ghurkas with Sandham, the Lieutenant took the other with him back to the palace. They had searched the place thoroughly, yet in the thick dust that was strewn everywhere, the only marks they could see were those that Sandham had made when he entered the hall some minutes earlier. The two men searched the ruin from top to bottom, but there was no trace of anybody. Yet they had both heard the scream—a human cry. There was no other creature in this world that could have uttered such a sound.

Within the month an artillery regiment moved into the jungle and pounded that sinister ruin into the ground with shell-fire. Then teams of natives from another district moved in and levelled the remains to the ground. They hoped that the evil spirt that haunted it had lost its strange power with that final act of destruction.

No more people were ever attacked by it—but for another thirty years or so, the place was still avoided as if it was the entrance to Hades. And perhaps it was, because no human or other living creature could have wreaked such terrible violence for so long, on so many people.

The explanation behind it all has never been discovered. The story came to my attention, when a journalist, Bruce Sandham, invited me to spend the weekend at his grandfather's house in Berkshire some years ago. His grandfather had been *the* Captain Sandham who had suffered that macabre experience half a century earlier. And the proof of the story was there for the world to see.

Beneath the silk mufflers that the old man habitually wore about his neck, were the bruises made by a





strangler. Had they really been made by his *own* hands?

I have often wondered, for the marks had been there—clearly imprinted in his flesh—for as long as his grandson could remember, and what human could leave such an indelible impression on another's throat? The scars on his wrists, made by the Ghurka kukri, were faint by comparison. But there were two other clues to that terrible night in the north-west province: Captain Sandham had returned with his hair transformed, within seconds, to the colour of fresh snow—and he had lost the power of speech!

## WHERE THE DEAD COULD NOT REST IN PEACE

Ahrensburg is a village which has little claim to fame beyond the borders of the province of Livonia. As recently as fifty years ago, it was no more than a handful of houses balanced above the waters of the Baltic, a fishing village whose inhabitants cared little for the outside world—the battles of Tsars and Emperors, the intrigues of Grand Dukes and Hereditary Counts meant little in a place like that. In 1844, few people had even heard of the place. But an event occurred then which briefly put the place on the map.

The cemetery at Ahrensburg was out of proportion to the size of the village itself. But this was because, over centuries, it had been used as the burial ground for the noble families for many miles around. The humble tombs of the native Ahrensburgers were quite overshadowed by the ornate burial chapels of the wealthy. The cemetery was a true City of the Dead, for in the dusk of dawn and evening the elaborate tombs took on the appearance of small palaces, each in its favoured street.

It was against one of these tombs of the wealthy that the force of some dark power was directed all through the summer of 1844. It was the tomb of a noble family of the name of Buxhoeden—the largest and most elaborate of them all, for it was designed to hold through eternity the mortal remains of generations of a powerful

family. Unlike the majority of the neighbouring vaults, the Buxhoeden mansion of death stood so close to the public highway that local farmers used its projecting ornaments as useful hitching posts for their horses when they came into the village.

This habit had developed over years, familiarity breeding indifference, if not contempt. It was a good spot—a few moments walk from the main street of the village and with good sweet grass underfoot for the benefit of the horses.

Then, in June of that year, the settled pattern was violently broken. A group of farmers had hitched their horses to the Buxhoeden tomb, but on this occasion the horses did not immediately commence to graze; on the contrary they began to display every sign of restlessness.

Horses are highly nervous creatures and one restless mount can easily communicate his unease to others. The riders, however, thought no more of it, and having checked the hitches, went off to their business in the village. The horses' restlessness increased. One reared and, for a brief moment, pounded with its great hoofs on the walls of the tomb. The others milled and stamped, whinnying with obvious terror. By then people nearby were attracted to the spot and stood looking on in surprise.

It was impossible to approach the animals, so a messenger was sent to the village to fetch the owners. By the time the men had returned one animal had been severely injured by his terrified fellows, all of whom were covered with sweat as though they had been cruelly raced for miles.

That was the beginning of the disturbance. Thereafter, it was impossible to continue the useful custom of using the tomb as a hitching post. Horses shied even when ridden past and any attempt to bring them close to the spot resulted in such a panic as to endanger the life of the rider.

It was at about this time that noises were heard coming from the interior of the sealed burial chambers. Reports differed widely, some said it sounded like the groans of a dying man; others swore that they more





closely resembled the sounds of hammer meeting nail on a hollow object—a coffin, for example.

The affair reached its climax in the summer. A member of the Buxhoeden family had died and, as was the custom from time immemorial, his body was brought to the cemetery by a horse-drawn hearse. The gate led past the tomb and it was only with the utmost difficulty that the coachman was able to get the terrified animals past the tomb and into the cemetery. At one stage, the hearse itself was in danger of being overturned and kicked to pieces.

The service proceeded without undue disturbance and the time came at last for the opening of the vault and the depositing of the coffin with its long line of forebears. The great doors were unlocked and swung open; the coffinbearers descended the steep steps into its cold depths. They should not have been absent for more than a few moments—no longer than it takes to deposit the coffin on one of the long shelves erected for the purpose. But the minutes passed as the mourners waited.

Suddenly one of the bearers rushed from the tomb, summoning the Governor of Livonia who was attending the funeral. Puzzled by the man's agitated gestures, the Governor descended and saw what it was that had delayed the party. The interior of the tomb was in indescribable confusion. Massive coffins, whose weight would tax the strength of two or three men, had been tossed around as though they were made of paper. The coffin-bearers had immediately thought that a deliberate act of sacrilege committed by an enemy of the family had taken place. But the heavy locks of the door were in perfect order, the key had been in the possession of a trusted member of the household staff, and there had been no attempt to force a way in.

The vault was tidied up, relocked, and the mourners retired. In response to family pressure, however, it was agreed that a check of the tomb should be made at regular intervals, and a few weeks later, attended by members of the family, the bishop, a doctor, the Mayor and other important officials, the Governor entered the tomb.

All those present satisfied themselves that the locks

had not been tampered with, but they found a similar state of chaos. Only three coffins had remained untouched—whether or not by coincidence, two of them belonged to tiny children and the third to an old woman who had had a reputation for sanctity.

Could the motive have been robbery—leaving aside the problem of how the thief had entered? The question was asked and swiftly answered for the coffins were opened and examined. None of the precious objects buried with the dead had been touched.

Again the vault was put into decent order, but this time a thin sprinkling of fine ash was scattered over the floor and the steps leading to the outer world. Again the massive doors were locked, the Mayor personally fixing the town seal upon them.

But even that was not considered sufficient. The Governor had reported the case to the court of the Tsar. Anything that had a religious significance, and anything that could affect the uneasy political situation in Russia, was deemed important, and the Governor had had the strictest orders to do all in his power to resolve the mystery. After having satisfied himself that the tomb was sealed in a manner which would defy any human attempt to enter undetected, the Governor posted three guards, who were to watch over the tomb, day and night, until the next inspection.

Meanwhile, the unidentifiable noises continued and it still remained impossible to bring horses near the tomb. No one was any nearer to solving the mystery. The inevitable theories of flood and local earthquake were advanced, but even had a hidden spring welled up inside and left no trace of its presence, it could not have moved the massive iron bound coffins. And no earthquake known to man could disturb the few square feet of the vault and not affect the outside world.

When the time came for the third inspection, the cemetery was crowded with people from miles around. The same group of officials approached the vault doors —Governor, Mayor, doctor, bishop and local priest. The doors were unlocked and swung upon their groaning hinges, and the first thing noticed was that the layer of ash on the steps was undisturbed. But the vault





wasn't. Again, the coffins of the old woman and the two children had not been touched, but the rest had been strewn around as though by a giant hand. Some had burst open, their pathetic contents scattered. From one of the coffins—that of a suicide—an arm protruded, pointing at the ceiling as though in mute protest. The layer of ash on the floor was undisturbed, save where a coffin had made a mark where it had tumbled over.

No attempt was made to put the place to rights. Silently, the official party retraced its steps to the bright, sunlit world where coffins that moved by themselves were an impossibility. But impossible or not, it had happened. The tomb was locked and the guards dismissed—whatever it was that entered the Buxhoeden vault would not be stopped by soldiers, no matter how brave or disciplined.

Back in his palace, the Governor drew up a detailed account of the affair which, signed by the unimpeachable witnesses, was duly deposited among the official archives. Then they discussed what was to be done. All were in agreement that the force at work in the Buxhoeden tomb was outside human knowledge and control. Was it, perhaps, localised? The only way to find out was to remove all the coffins and bury them elsewhere.

This task was rapidly accomplished and, with the removal of the coffins so ended the affair of the Ahrensburg tomb. It stood empty for years thereafter, until time and decay wrought their natural end. Never again were unidentified sounds heard coming from it; never again did horses shy as they approached it. Nor was the plot of land in which the coffins now lay buried ever disturbed.

No man could ever hazard a guess as to the nature of the force which objected to the presence of tombs in the vault, nor why it manifested itself only during that summer in 1844.

## THE "JOYITA"

A ripple of excitement swept through the crowd on Suva beach as the fishing boat *Joyita* was towed in

through the storm-lashed sea. Everybody could see that, apart from the rescue team, there was not a living soul on board.

The silence was not caused by surprise. It was the silence of sorrow and despair. Although the spectators were witnessing a mystery that could only be compared to the enigma of the infamous *Marie Celeste*, they were not astonished at what had happened. Indeed, many of them would have been puzzled if nothing had happened to the *Joyita*—for she had a reputation for being a cursed ship. And that October day in 1955 proved to the world that the twenty year old jinx was still as active as ever.

It began in the nineteen thirties, when film star Thelma Dodd was found dead on board in San Francisco Bay. During the war, *Joyita* served in the Pacific, and ran aground on the Hawaiian Islands, splitting open her hull.

After the war, it was assumed that the *Joyita* had outlived her evil reputation and she was bought by a wealthy American businessman who converted her back to the luxury class, installing swivel fishing-chairs and shining diesel engines.

But these refinements couldn't remove the jinx. It reappeared when, in a disastrous error of judgement, the owner of *Joyita* sold her to Lieutenant T. H. Miller. Miller, to say the least, seemed decidedly accident-prone. Although an experienced sailor from the age of fourteen, he seemed unable to settle down to a firm career. He did small chartering jobs in the Pacific, content to make a small living and enjoy himself in the friendliness of the Islands.

Frequently in debt, he began to regret saddling himself with the 70-toner *Joyita* which he had confidently hired because her roomy refrigeration holds made her beyond doubt the most superbly equipped fishing vessel in the world. In Hawaii, "Dusty" Miller found a ready market for frozen catches.

But *Joyita*, although structurally sound, was 21 years old and maintenance costs became alarmingly high. Finding that his catches barely covered his expenses, he was constantly raising his prices and within a year had been forced out of business. He had to lay up *Joyita*,





and had the galling experience of watching her slow deterioration.

By the time New Zealander R. D. Pearless heard of Miller's predicament, the dispirited owner of *Joyita* was eking out a bare living in the port of Apia, Western Samoa, with casual labouring.

Twenty-nine-year-old Pearless, newly-appointed District Officier of the Tokelau Islands to the north, was, like Miller, a man in trouble. Not in the same way as the bankrupt fishing vessel owner, but nevertheless in a predicament which, if unsolved, could have meant the end of his career.

The Tokelaus, 350 miles from Samoa, urgently needed medical supplies and more important, a vessel to ship consignments of copra, their sole means of livelihood. The islands are fairly inaccessible by sea, and at that time, few boats thought it worth making the run at a price Tokolaus could afford.

Desperately, Pearless got in touch with Miller. But there was the problem of paying for *Joyita*. Prompt representations were made to the Western Samoan government. But they would not charter the boat. The story of Miller's desperate attempt to get rid of his catches was well known, and few had any confidence in the *Joyita's* seaworthiness. Polite excuses were made, but no one was prepared to underwrite a voyage.

Meanwhile, the position of Tokolau grew worse, with doctors desperately needing supplies to deal with a virus infection. An airlift was tried, but quickly abandoned, after one flying boat had its hull ripped to pieces by submerged coral.

The able and energetic Pearless refused to be defeated. If the government refused to consider *Joyita*, perhaps some commercial firm would. After some searching, he found an island trading organization that was willing to charter the boat. With tough and seasoned American mariner, Chuck Simpson as his First Mate, and a hastily assembled scratch crew, Miller prepared to sail on Sunday, October 2, 1955.

Then came an unexpected snag. An official from the charterers paid the Captain a visit. Would he make room for some families wanting to return to the Tokelaus?

Miller realised he could scarcely refuse, although he knew he wasn't licenced to carry passengers. Twenty-four people were hustled on board.

Then there was another setback. A clutch defect in the port engine had second engineer Henry McCarthy, feverishly sweating away the precious hours below. It wasn't until early afternoon that *Joyita*, her engine sounding decidedly throaty, began to move towards the harbour mouth. She didn't get far. Out of control, she drifted towards a reef—and obstinately stuck there. The angry crew and passengers stormed off her, resigned to another night in the harbour. Dusty Miller stayed nervously below, attempting to brush aside the angry remonstrances of the charterer.

It wasn't only the firm footing the bill who became increasingly dissatisfied with Miller. The head of the local radio station couldn't help wondering why the Captain hadn't approached him to establish a radio contact schedule. However, the station was later reassured by Miller that there would be contact twice daily on call sign *WNIM*. It was an undertaking that was never to be honoured.

The *Joyita* slipped out of the harbour by night and for a while, was lost to the world. No one, either at the charterer or radio station, had seen her go.

On October 6, from Fakaofo in the Tokelaus came news that *Joyita* was not on schedule. Clearly, the fishing vessel was in trouble. The Royal New Zealand Air Force rescue team swung into action with its team of specially equipped Sunderlands who carried out visual and radar sweeps within a ten-mile radius of *Joyita*'s original destination. But it was no use. Soon everyone was accepting the fact that Dusty Miller, crew and passengers had perished.

It wasn't until five weeks later, that the Gilbert and Ellis supply vessel *Tuvalu* spotted the heavily listing *Joyita* off Suva. Her port side superstructure had, by some unknown cause, been ripped away. After she had been towed to Suva beach, her flooded compartments were pumped out. It became clear that here was one of the most perplexing mysteries in maritime history.

There was no trace of passenger or crew. No mes-





sage of any kind was found. The damage to the boat was trivial. Most people immediately branded Miller the villain. This was certain they reasoned, because £1,000 in cash entrusted to him to pay the islanders for their copra had vanished.

Theories abounded. Japanese war veterans, eking out a precarious living as pirates, were said to be responsible. It was even suggested that they possessed a submarine secreted away in one of the islands.

Could it be that *Joyita* had interfered with Japanese fishing lanes—and the whole vessel was murdered as a penalty? This theory, which enjoyed wide popularity, produced a hurt and bitter protest from the Japanese government—plus a heated denial. The West Samoans issued suitable subervient apologies to Tokyo.

Suggested solutions of this kind were not taking seriously by the Inquiry Commission which sat during the following winter. But the results were inconclusive. It was agreed that boats had indeed left harbours in better state of repair than Dusty Miller's *Joyita*—but then everyone knew Dusty Miller. The Commission pronounced facts that everyone knew already—that the *Joyita* had become flooded and immobilised. The mystery of the fate of those aboard remains.

After the tragedy, no one in notoriously superstitious naval circles wanted anything to do with this latter-day *Marie Celeste*. It was bought eventually by Robin Maughan, novelist nephew of the late William Somerset Maugham. There are quite a few sailors, notable in West Samoa, who admire Mr. Maugham's courage, but scarcely his wisdom.

## WHEN THE PRICE OF DEATH WAS A SILVER COIN

You can imagine how I felt during that long and exceptionally hot summer of 1948. The rush hour crowds and the noise and fumes of the traffic in the streets made life in London far from pleasant. So my wife and I decided to give up our flat near Marble Arch and move

out into the country. We bought a picturesque period cottage on the outskirts of Petworth, in Sussex, and although this delighted the children, there were several drawbacks as far as I was concerned. The main one, which I didn't foresee, was that I spent six hours every day commuting by train between the cottage and my London office. And as my work on a newspaper frequently involved long and erratic hours, I often missed the fast commuter trains. That was how I first met Ralph Woodward.

For the first few months as we travelled on the late evening trains we didn't say much to each other, except for the usual polite pleasantries. Ralph always had a briefcase filled with business correspondence that needed his attention, while I used the journey to rough out notes for my projected book on English haunted houses. I had no idea then that Ralph was also an "occasional" student of the occult. Neither could I have forseen where this would lead him or realise the guilt that I was soon to bear.

It began one August evening as the train slowed down on its approach to Pulborough station. I hadn't realised we were so near our destination and, in alarm, I tried to collect my papers but some of them—and a few photographs—scattered all over the compartment floor. Woodward leaned forward to help me gather them together and picked up the photograph of a well-known haunted house in Essex.

From his expression, it was obvious that he recognised the place, but he said nothing. Within the next few weeks, however, our acquaintanceship ripened into what promised to be a good companionship and, to my surprise, he discussed his interest in the occult and supernormal. That this staid and sober-looking stockbroker should have such an interest was surprising. I also discovered that he had investigated many so-called hauntings in a dilettante fashion.

It was this that sparked off the bizarre sequence of events Ralph was soon to experience, and looking back at what was soon to follow, I have wondered since how much I was to blame. I often wonder, too, that if I





hadn't told him about Grafham Manor—and the haunted crossroads—whether he might still be alive today.

But his interest in the progress I was making with my anthology of occult stories was so flattering that I couldn't resist discussing it with him. Most of the local "haunted houses" he knew. Most of them, with one exception . . . and that was Grafham Manor. This was all the more surprising, because he lived only a few miles away from the derelict Georgian house. The history of the last owner of the Manor, Bellamy Taylor, interested him immensely.

Although Taylor had owned the Manor about 150 years earlier, when he had inherited it from an uncle, there had been no great wealth with his inheritance. Gradually the house and the rambling estates surrounding it lost their former beauty and grandeur. The house and grounds were neglected and soon acquired a grim, forbidding appearance.

In order to make ends meet, Taylor started running a shuttle service with a small wagon. The London to Chichester coach stopped at the crossroads, where Pulborough station stands today, and anybody wishing to travel from there to Grafham, or any of the adjoining hamlets, had to make his own arrangements for the rest of the journey. Or else, hire Taylor's wagon which waited each evening to meet passengers from the late night coach.

The only trouble was that some of these passengers failed to arrive at their destination, and soon the rumours were spreading that Taylor was murdering selected passengers for their money and valuables. The way he selected them was simple. Before allowing them to board his wagon, he always insisted that they pay him at the crossroads, and always in silver. No doubt, he watched carefully to see how much money they had in their purses.

However, there was never any proof against him. Once or twice, anxious parents or relatives did complain to the authorities about the strange disappearances. And once or twice Taylor was questioned closely, and his home at the Manor was searched, as were the grounds. But no trace of murder was ever found.

Yet once he died it was a different story. It started when his wagon had been missed by the travellers at the crossroads on several occasions. Further inquiries soon showed that nobody had seen him in quite a while. So two bailiffs from a neighbouring estate went along to Grafham Manor. Taylor was found dead in his bed. The estate was sold shortly afterwards and the new owners set about renovating the place. The garden was landscaped by a famous gardener and the house was practically regutted. The first step in that direction was to rip away the rotten panelling in the hall. And that was when they discovered what had happened to Taylor's passengers who had disappeared. Behind the panels, on one wall, they found a "priest's hole"—a secret room—which was piled high with the rotting remains of several dozen corpses.

The sensation swept through the country and the Manor became a macabre legend. Shortly after that, the ghost stories started. People staying in the Manor claimed that they heard screams, ghostly voices ringing out from the secret chamber behind the hall. Sometimes they begged for mercy; other times they pleaded for help . . . occasionally they sounded like the sobs of the dying.

Late one night, two people left the London coach at Pulborough crossroads. They were going to Grafham and arranged to be met there by their relatives, but for some reason their transport was delayed. Neither of them had been to Sussex before and although they had heard of the mass murders, none of them had known Bellamy Taylor. And neither of them recognised the gruff-voiced, elderly man in the hooded cape who drove out of the shadows on a wagon and offered them transport to Grafham. Naturally, they accepted. It was a bitter cold October night, and having travelled for many hours, they were anxious to reach their destination. They eagerly accepted the wagoner's offer. First of all, though, he insisted on being paid—and they remembered the greedy way he had watched them fishing out the money.

Their friends were surprised when they arrived, but they were horrified when the two men told how they had travelled. The man they described as the driver of the wagon was the late Bellamy Taylor.





Once the initial alarm passed, it was assumed that somebody had been playing a joke. Not a very admirable hoax, but one perhaps that would have amused some rustic labourer.

Then the first of the two men died. During his stay in Grafham he had been preparing to ride to a hunt meeting when he slipped from the saddle of his cantering horse and broke his neck. Within twenty-four hours, the second man died by falling mysteriously through his bedroom window.

These were the first two deaths in a grim chain that was to last for almost eighty years, and there were curious circumstances connected with each. Sometimes the victims were frightened by the sight of a caped figure on a wagon near Pulborough crossroads or, uncannily, they were strangers who had accepted transport from the same mysterious figure. Altogether more than thirty people died with suspected associations with the ghost of Bellamy Taylor. But when the railway was built from London, down through Horsham and Pulborough and the South Coast, coach services soon followed, and Taylor's spectre "gave up the ghost", as many local people said in relief.

There were still reports of moans and groans, screams and sobs heard in the Manor. A few people still claimed to have spotted the ghost wagoner near the crossroads. But the former was usually blamed on high-spirited youths lurking about the decaying house, and the latter was explained by the fact that there was a very popular, modern inn built beside the crossroads for the convenience of travellers arriving by train. Yet, I must point out here, that in all the months I'd known Ralph Woodward, the strongest beverage he ever sampled there with me was a fruit juice. For Woodward had *always* been a teetoller.

Once he heard the story of the Manor and Taylor, he seemed rather amused and had me promise that if I ever wanted to visit Grafham Manor in connection with my book, I would let him know. I did—and first I dined at his splendid, modernised Tudor period cottage nearby, and then we went together to visit Grafham Manor.

It was late evening when we arrived there, but I wanted to get a few suitably atmospheric photographs of the place and just as the sun was setting I got to work. By the time I had finished it was quite dark and the broken window panes, crumbling brickwork and stark timbers certainly made it *feel* haunted. A wind had risen and was blowing softly through the trees and in through the ramshackle building. The scraping of the branches and the rattle of the tiles *could* have convinced a nervous individual that they were the groans of ghosts —or the rattle of bones. But neither Woodward nor myself were highly strung people.

I was startled, though, when the warped door creaked open slowly in the wind as we walked past the front of the house. It was so unexpected that I almost expected to see somebody come out to greet us. For one brief second Woodward and I stared at each other in the darkness. Then we both burst out laughing and my colleague said that he felt disappointed that the ghost hadn't appeared after all. And added loudly that, perhaps, Mr. Bellamy Taylor should feel guilty at disappointing us.

Suddenly the door slammed shut again. It was so loud that it sounded like a crack of thunder . . . or as if somebody had crashed it in anger. Neither of us laughed that time. Somehow, it was almost as if the ghost *had* heard us mocking it.

As I said, neither of us was the nervous type. But there *was* a certain broodingly sinister atmosphere about the Manor that evening, and although Woodward had been teasing *me*, even he confessed later that he had sensed it was almost as if he had insulted the house.

Several weeks later, Ralph and I travelled from London together on a later train than usual and when we alighted at Pulborough station the late bus hadn't arrived at the stop. We stood talking for several moments, and then glanced around as some faint noise came from the shadows across the roadway. Ralph's eyes widened—his face looked startled in the moonlight. Then he relaxed and smiled rather shame-facedly at me: "For a moment I thought I saw your ghost wagoner there. That sounded just like a horse whining, didn't it?"





Just then the coach came round the bend, so I was saved the necessity of having to answer, for I felt as embarrassed as he had been. The wind rustling through the trees *had* sounded—for a second—exactly like that. And the massed shadows could have taken any form your imagination wanted them to assume . . . even that of a hooded driver on a wagon.

The next week Ralph went to New York for several months on business at his head office, and the week he was due back I was working at home putting the finishing touches on my book. So it was sometime before we met again, but when we did he had an amazing experience to relate.

One evening, shortly after his return from New York, he had caught the late train home. The coach had been running late, so he decided to walk part of the way. Then to his astonishment he had caught up with a horse-drawn wagon by the bridge across the River Arun and it was travelling towards Grafham! Rather amused by the coincidence, Ralph had asked the driver for a lift which was readily agreed. But before he hopped aboard the wagon, he thrust his hand into his pockets, pulled out a fistful of silver and handed the driver a coin. If you were Bellamy Taylor, he had said jokingly, you'd have asked for it first.

The driver, he remembered had been a rather surly man—probably on the deaf side—who pocketed the coin without as much as a thank you. Ralph was quite thankful for the ride and, being tired, he hadn't felt much like chatting, so they travelled most of the way in silence.

I was rather puzzled by this and thought that Ralph was having a joke at my expense, but his next words proved his sincerity. He pointed out that the driver should cash in on his asset: "Think of how the tourists would go for something like that in the summer," he said reflectively. "The reincarnation of a murderer, taking them for rides through the countryside . . ."

Yet I was still puzzled. I certainly hadn't seen a horse-drawn wagon in all the time I had been living in the district. Now—for my own peace of mind—I keep hoping that, someday, I will see one. And If I do I

hope it won't be Bellamy Taylor's.

The next morning Ralph's wife phoned to say that he was dead, and it had been such a stupid accident. Apparently he had been walking across the livingroom when he stepped on one of his children's toys—slipped and broke his neck. A stupid and *mysterious accident*, because his wife was certain that she had cleared all the toys away earlier that evening. And the toy, a roller skate, had been in such a prominent place that she felt certain that she couldn't have missed seeing it. Neither could Ralph.

It was a death as inexplicable and mysterious as all the other deaths that followed when ever any of the other victims had accepted a lift from the alleged ghost of Bellamy Taylor. Of course, it's possible it might just have been an unfortunate coincidence. Yet, I often wonder if Ralph would still be alive today, if I hadn't told him the story about Grafham Manor that evening.

No, I certainly am *not* the nervous type, for as a psychic investigator one just can't afford to be. But I know I shall always remember the way the door of the Manor creaked suddenly open that evening we visited it together—just as I remember the way it had slammed shut. Almost as if the ghost of Bellamy Taylor had felt insulted by Ralph's amused comment.

But the strangest thing of all happened a few weeks later. I was strolling across that bridge—the one where Ralph met the wagoner—and I picked up a bright, new silver florin. As I stared at it in surprise, I wondered if Ralph had dropped it there. Or—another thought crossed my mind—what use would a silver coin be to Bellamy Taylor's ghost, anyway?

## TO RECOVER THE TREASURE IS TO DIE

It was in the autumn of 1932 that the peaceful group of islands near Tahiti was disturbed by the largest and most expensively equipped treasure hunt the world has ever known. Drilling rigs were erected everywhere.





Towering far higher than the tallest palm trees, their powerful drills plunged down through the pearl-shaped pools which simmered among the coral reefs. Teams of experienced divers descended beneath the sea, fighting off the giant, man-eating eels, the killer sharks and marauding barracuda, in their search for unbelievable wealth. To some of them, they were risking their lives chasing a dream; but to others there was a strong possibility of recovering a treasure trove more valuable than their most fabulous dreams . . . a treasure from the ancient Inca Empire, which was believed to be worth over £30 million. However, it was a treasure that seemed to be guarded by a strange jinx—for all those who had sought it in the past had met violent and mysterious deaths.

It was one such death that first brought the treasure to Charles Howe's attention. And as he watched the divers disappearing beneath the lagoons, his thoughts, no doubt, went back to that moment twenty years earlier in the hospital in Christchurch, New Zealand, where an old seaman named Jack Killorain was dying. The two men did not know each other well, but Killorain had been well aware of Howe's love of adventure—and money. So, Killorain had a very strange story indeed to tell.

Sixty years earlier, 15-year-old Jack Killorain, had gone to sea as a cabin boy and it wasn't long before he became aware that the crew was plotting something. They shared a common secret, clearly masterminded by the Spanish first-mate, Alvarez. Possibly because Alvarez and his friends needed help and felt that Killorain's loyalty could be bought with promise of a fortune, the boy found himself involved in plans for one of the most daring robberies the American continent had ever known.

Alvarez explained that the previous year, he had been travelling extensively in Central and South America. Several times he had heard of the vast treasure owned by the monks whose monastery was at Pisco in Peru. To steal it wouldn't prove too easy. Then Alvarez had a bit of luck—he met a de-frocked embittered priest, Father Matteo. A former member of the Pisco community, Matteo had been expelled for having a clande-

stone affair with a local woman. The ex-priest was only too pleased to tell his new friends about the Inca treasure.

Soon a daring plan was shaping in Alvarez's mind. It was this which he outlined on the boat bound for Buenos Aires. When the party reached land, the robbers, who included Killorain, disguised themselves as Government troops and set out by mule train for Pisco. Alvarez was confident. "I will not have to *steal* the treasure," he promised. "Those monks will give it to me."

On arrival, Alvarez asked politely to see the senior priest. Gravely, the Spaniard informed the horrified monk that he had overheard a plan by the renegade Father Matteo to steal the Inca fortune. "Even now," he stated, "that priest is on his way to Pisco with a gang of desperadoes."

The senior priest countered with a rueful smile: "Obviously, my friend, you do not know the legend of the Inca treasure. It is said that anyone who touches it unlawfully dies violently—and Matteo will certainly be no exception."

Unknown to both men the curse of the Incas had already worked. *Matteo had been stabbed to death in a waterfront alley that very day.*

However, the priest believed Alvarez implicitly and accepted his offer of help. The priest was told reassuringly that the treasure could be conveyed secretly and in safety to the town of Calloa, 200 miles away, where it would be guarded by troops until Matteo's "gang" was rounded up.

Alvarez was so persuasive that the monks believed him. When darkness fell, the raiding party was led by the unsuspecting priests to the crypt.

Killorain at once appreciated how necessary Alvarez's scheme had been. The treasure could certainly not have been removed without the co-operation of the monks, as the entrance to the crypt was guarded by iron doors, behind which were others, equally thick, of oak. The crypt consisted of three rooms, one of which was stacked from floor to ceiling with gold ingots. Elsewhere were gold candlesticks encrusted with precious stones, and there were Spanish doubloons, jewels and ornaments.





The thieves began dismantling the Aladdin's caves. Obviously, the legend of the treasure didn't bother Alvarez too much.

The yacht he had chartered was certainly Calloa-bound, but the captain and crew of *Bosun Bird* had no idea what they were carrying. And they were destined never to find out. That night, Alvarez and his men crept up behind the other sailors, slit their throats and flung them overboard. Desperately, the priests who had come on the journey tried to escape over the sides of the boat or to hide in the holds containing the treasure. The orgy of massacre went on.

As Alvarez was desperately ridding himself of witnesses, a sudden storm crashed into the *Bosun Bird*, tossing the puny boat on the giant waves as if it had been a toy. It was like a curse and a judgement. Desperately, the usurpers tried to plot a course, but only an inky blackness fractured by steel-hard rain, lay ahead. Any thoughts of making it to Calloa were abandoned.

Eventually, after hours in tumultuous seas, Alvarez beached on the Tuamatos. The crew hid their loot in a tiny atoll and scuttled what was left of their boat. Then they made their way to Port Darwin where their story of being survivors of a ship lost in the storm was believed. Alvarez's new plan was to hire a boat and pick up the booty when the excitement following the theft had died down.

But the curse of the Inca treasure wasn't finished. The thieves, tired at having to wait any longer for the share-out, quarrelled amongst themselves. Alvarez was beaten to death in a bar-room brawl. This was one murder which could not be concealed. The rest of the crew were rounded up, tried and hanged. Only Killorain escaped.

The old sailor died a few days after telling his story to Howe. As best he could he described the location of the Inca treasure. For months the French divers carried on their investigations. But the coral reefs with their hidden crevasses and sinister guardians proved too dangerous and the attempt was abandoned. The £30 million haul from the monks of Pisco has never been found. Perhaps it is better that it remains hidden.

## WHEN DEATH RODE ON THE PILLION

After serving for three years in the Far East, Nigel Stone was more than pleased when the Royal Air Force posted him to Norwich, where he was to receive further training in aircraft maintenance. Apart from being in England again, Norwich wasn't far from London, which meant that he could see much more of his parents.

The first thing he did on reaching his new post was to buy a motorbike and whenever he had a weekend pass, he roared across England . . . from Norfolk, through Suffolk and into London. For the first few weeks, Nigel tried various routes through the suburbs to his home in Brixton, eventually realising that the Dartford Tunnel was probably the quickest route.

It was on his second run through there, into London, one evening in July, 1965, that he saw the girl for the first time. Wearing a white shiny raincoat, she was standing by the road at the entrance to the tunnel obviously looking for a lift through to the other side. She was right under a lamp, and Nigel could see that she had long, blonde hair. He stopped, waved to her and, as the traffic thundered passed, she silently climbed on behind him. She clung to him as they roared off through the tunnel. Nigel hadn't thought to ask where she wanted to go, but he'd slow down at the other side and perhaps even ask her if she'd like to stop for a meal somewhere. It was late, and he was hungry, and as he hadn't told his parents he was coming, it wasn't really fair to expect his mother to get him a meal. Besides, it would be an excuse to talk to the girl.

Eventually, he reached the end of the tunnel and drew to a stop under a street lamp. But when he turned to speak to the girl, she had gone! He couldn't fathom, how on earth she had nipped off and disappeared so quickly, but there wasn't a sign of her.

Perhaps she had gone down the alley. But there was no sign of her there and she'd be hard to miss with that





shiny white coat and long blonde hair. Puzzled, Nigel drove on home.

He had forgotten all about her until about four weeks later when he was on the same route and approaching the tunnel again. And there she was, wearing her white shiny raincoat, standing under the street lamp, one hand in her pocket, and the other thumbing a lift.

He stopped. "Hello again," he said smiling. "We meet once more." She smiled at him . . . she had the most beautiful smile. And she climbed nimbly onto the pillion seat behind him.

Off they went through the tunnel, and again he was conscious of her light, cold touch. A gentle girl, obviously; a very quiet girl. He really would like to take her for a coffee somewhere. So determined to speak to her this time, Nigel stopped the bike under the same street lamp as before, and turned quickly towards her. But—again—she had gone. Disappeared into thin air.

How on earth she could have leapt off and run away in the short space it had taken to stop and turn round was a complete mystery. This time he was even more disappointed.

But being a young man with a lot to do, he soon forgot about the girl. It was only when he was riding home to London on his motorbike that he would remember her, and he always found himself looking out for her at the entrance to the tunnel, just in case—by some wonderful coincidence—she might be looking for a lift again. If he ever saw her again, he had decided to invite her to have a meal with him, before she even got onto the bike. There'd be no more of this disappearing trick, Nigel promised himself that!

The summer months passed, but he didn't see her. There were some advantages to travelling on a summer evening. It was light, but it wasn't very pleasant if you got into a rush hour crowd of cars returning from a trip to the sea and the helmet he always wore seemed hotter and heavier. He longed to take it off, but his mother had made him promise to always wear it.

Summer faded into autumn and it was on a trip in early October, that he found himself thinking hard about that girl again. He had a very clear picture of her. Her

pale face with the beautiful smile, the long, blonde hair and her smart shiny white raincoat.

He had entered the tunnel and was driving at the regulation speed, when he suddenly caught a glimpse of her. There she was, walking along the path at the side of the tunnel—white raincoat, long flowing hair and all. In his excitement, he picked up speed, and failing to notice a patch of oil on the road surface, he skidded. As he shut his eyes, he heard the ghastly sound of screeching brakes as the car in the other lane tried to avoid his careering motorcycle. There was the sound of shattering metal and then he lost consciousness.

He came to as the ambulance men were carrying him on a stretcher into the nearest hospital. "You've had a lucky escape," said one. "It's only a broken leg and a few bruises, as far as I can see. If you hadn't had a helmet your skull would have been cracked."

"What happened?" asked Nigel.

"You skiddded straight into a car!" said the second ambulance man. "Funny, it happened just where that young girl had an accident last year, a beautiful girl, too. But she was dead by the time we got her into the ambulance. No helmet. Riding on the back of her boyfriend's motorbike. And he was an R.A.F. bloke like yourself.

"It made my heart break to see her lying there, with the blood thick in her beautiful blonde hair and all over her smart white raincoat. One of them shiny PVC ones, it was."

Nigel thought about it as he waited to have his leg fixed. So he'd been giving pillion rides to a ghost girl. And if he'd been killed, too—what then?

## FLYING SAUCER ABOVE BOTTOM BAY

Elis Grahn walked slowly through the forest by the shores of Bottom Bay, between Finland and Sweden. It was a cold April evening in 1967 and Elis huddled down inside his heavy overcoat. He would be glad to





reach home, it certainly wasn't a night to be wandering about the countryside. Then he glanced up at the myriad stars hanging like dew drops in the clear, cloudless sky and saw something that brought him to an abrupt halt—something that shouldn't have been there.

Hovering, motionless and silent, above the treetops, not more than a few hundred yards away, was a gigantic sinister-looking bright disc! For several minutes all he could do was stare, fascinated by its peculiarly hypnotic beauty. The object's perimeter was about three times that of the full moon, a rich green in colour, which contrasted vividly with the "inside" which was red mixed with an occasional tinge of violet.

Elis was only too familiar with the phenomenon of the Northern Lights which appeared during the cold Scandinavian winter and which he had seen countless times. He *knew* that they flickered and flashed all over the sky as they continually changed shape . . . yet this weird disc remained quite inert and constant in colour!

Convinced beyond doubt that the object was something unaccountably different, Grahn stood there and pondered the uncanny sight. What could it be . . . had it possibly travelled from Outer Space. But most important of all, was how could he possibly explain it to anyone?

But chance was to have it that others should witness the sight. A few minutes later two 17-year-old boys from his neighbourhood came walking towards him. Grahn called them over and together they marvelled at the glowing disc. As they watched, *it began to move!*

Turning slowly on its axis, it lost some of the distinct outline, the colours also began to change! Now the weird object formed a faint greenish-white glow—the red, which a moment ago had been clearly defined, vanished.

Leaving the boys, Grahn raced back to his house to collect his binoculars. When he returned, the boys had fled, but his wife accompanied him. Together they witnessed the UFO move gradually to a position some 20 degrees to the left of where it had first appeared. It was still above the trees, and they studied it carefully through the field-glasses from several vantage points. All the while, they listened intently for some sound,

but there was nothing except the wind in the trees.

The disc appeared a little brighter, but still very shapeless, and try as he would, Elis could not perceive anything that would make the object seem solid.

Then, suddenly he noticed an interesting new factor. From the "edges" he could see the stars behind the object, but from the *"front"* it was completely opaque! Was there some sort of solidarity to the weird disc after all? Steadying the focus by resting the binoculars on a wall, he looked again into the dense center part and this time he thought he was imagining what he saw. He blinked hard before taking a second look and changed the angle of perception to ensure there could be no mistake. Through the "misty" center were black lines leaning slightly to the left. It was almost as though they had been drawn with a pencil and ruler, and they remained as steady and regular as the object itself.

Then, the uncanny disc began slowly to disappear, although it maintained the same position. It was fading just like the dying picture on a television screen. Grahn checked the time. It was 11.05 P.M. When he first sighted the object, he felt sure it was made of something material —solid—but as he had continued watching he became uncertain.

No matter what the uncanny disc was, Elis Grahn was convinced of one factor—it had no earthly explanation!

The altitude, distance and size of the object were impossible to calculate exactly, except that it was obviously very large and a good height above him.

So far four people had spotted the strange object. But further events were soon to prove beyond doubt the weird disc's presence.

No one lived in the direction of the object, which was probably over the sea beyond the woods. On the evening of the sighting, there had not been the slightest sign of fog, cloud or the moon. The sea was frozen over, so the disc could not have been some odd reflection from a passing vessel. The temperature was minus one-two degrees Centigrade. After the object disappeared, it was assumed that the case was closed. But there was a sequel yet to come.

Three days later, the local newspaper announced that





a man and his wife, who had been travelling home by car, had seen a similar glowing object. They described it as being "moon-sized." And as they watched it, the disc turned to the same whitish cloud that the Grahns had seen. The second sighting had been about forty miles from the first and it was also seen by many people in the town of Vateli, ten miles further away.

The factor in this case that has so puzzled ufologists is the description of the strange disc. Quite apart from the consistency in the reports from all the eyewitnesses, no *similar* UFO has ever before been seen. And among the many sightings that have taken place over the intervening years, none has been even slightly comparable.

Elis Grahn is living in the hope that the peculiar, beautiful hovering disc will return to those woods near Gamlakarleby, because he would like a second chance to gaze upon it—and wonder.

## THE MURDER PICTURE THAT CAME FROM NOWHERE

Victor Harrington felt certain that the woodland glade in the heart of the Cotswolds was just the sort of place he was looking for. He was a professional artist who had been commissioned to work on a series of landscapes portraying the English countryside. And his first project was that forest setting.

But no sooner had he set up his easel and started work than the most uncanny experience he had ever known began to take place. Suddenly he felt *compelled* to sketch. Without controlling the action of his charcoal, he began to draw two figures. One was a pretty young woman, with an expression of contempt in her eyes. The other figure was a young man. On his face Harrington was drawing an expression of fear, despair and sorrow.

Scarcely realising what he was doing, Harrington began to paint the figures. The woman he coloured in rich, extravagant shades and hues, she was obviously a woman of some standing, her clothes were fine and expensive. Yet the man, from the drabness of his dress, seemed less

distinct. Harrington painted them in minute detail and it was quite the best work he had ever accomplished.

He had become so engrossed in his work—and so surprised—that he did not notice the light beginning to fade. It was only when he couldn't see for the twilight, that he realised it was time to return home. In the half light, the glade seemed strangely silent and sinister and Harrington quickly packed away his paints and walked hastily across the grassy patch in the center of the clearing. The silence was intense, yet he was obsessed by the feeling he was not entirely alone there.

He was so busy staring over his shoulder, his eyes straining for the slightest movement in the glade, that he failed to notice he was walking along the edge of a huge crevice in the earth until his foot slipped and he nearly toppled into the yawning gap. The crevice was narrow in width, but extremely deep. Had he fallen, he would have met with certain death.

As he hurried back to his aunt's house in the village, he was convinced his journey had been worthwhile. He had been working well and the figures he had painted were his most perfect picture to date. He resolved to rise early the next morning and finish the work.

But the next day he could find no inspiration. He soon became convinced that it was the strange atmosphere in the glade that had influenced his hand, and he returned to the clearing once more. But even there inspiration did not come. He tried to recapture the urgency he had felt before, tried to will his hand to paint in the same fashion, but it was useless. The "vision" had completely vanished.

Bitterly disappointed, he was about to head back to the village when he felt a chill in the air, and although the sun was shining, he was shivering. Then, the urge to paint returned. He found himself sketching the same two figures. But the glade was *still* empty!

Soon Harrington was listening to a conversation between two people who were not there!

"You promised to marry me." A man's voice said imploringly. "You *made* me do something I knew was wrong!"





Then a girl's mocking laughter echoed around the woods.

Suddenly horror swept across Harrington when he realised what he had drawn. The woman was pushing the man into the crevasse! Harrington was so frightened by the weird influence which had possessed him, that he snatched the canvas from the stand and ran back to the village as fast as he could.

When he reached his aunt's cottage, he discovered that his cousin had returned unexpectedly from abroad, and in the pleasure of the reunion, the artist forgot his strange experience. It was later that evening when he showed the paintings to his cousin, Richard Dalton, who exclaimed in surprise: "Where did you see these two?"

Harrington protested he had never seen them before, that he had imagined them, and went on to tell Dalton of the strange compulsion that he had experienced in the forest. Richard listened for a while, then he began to tell Harrington who the young man and woman were —or rather who they had been . . .

A few months earlier, the man, Alfie King, had been the cashier in the local Bank, *had been* because shortly afterwards he disappeared along with several thousand pounds which he had stolen from his office. And the girl Harrington had portrayed had been more than friendly with the missing man. It had been suspected that they had run away together until King's body was discovered at the bottom of the crevasse with a broken neck. Since then, nobody had heard from the girl. She vanished together with all the money that King had stolen.

## THE GHOST COFFIN OF MAYNOOTH

For almost a month, the listless figure of 85-year-old priest, Father John Damien, lay in the hospital near Maynooth, in Kildare, Ireland. Everyone who visited him including his bishop, Dr. Lyons of Kilmore, seemed certain that the old man could not live very much longer.

Meanwhile, the hamlet over which Damien presided as parish priest was without an active incumbent. As the dying man lingered on, his pastoral duties were neglected, so the bishop reluctantly decided to appoint a successor. Thus it was that, when death eventually came to Father Damien, the priest who gave the last rites was the newly-ordained, Patrick O'Flaherty, new pastor of the village which Father Damien had served for over thirty-five years.

Just before the end, feebly, Father Damien tried to speak to the younger man. But his voice was the barest whisper; beyond mention of the village church, O'Flaherty could catch little. The old priest died soon after.

The next few weeks passed busily for Father O'Flaherty as he settled in to his new parish. The village was remote and the people, used to Father Damien, were slow to accept a stranger in their midst. Even the church seemed bleak and uninviting.

One Saturday evening in May, 1935, his successor, after hearing Confessions, locked the front door of the church and in the gathering darkness knelt in prayer before the altar. After a few minutes, he suddenly found himself blinded and dazzled as the lights flickered on. Then the door of the Sacristy opened slowly and the stooping figure of an elderly priest made its way to the center of the altar and looked beseechingly down the church as if imploring help.

Father O'Flaherty found himself staring at the dead Father Damien. Then the young priest stiffened as he heard the click of the church's double doors swing open. It could only have been a matter of moments before O'Flaherty—convulsed with terror—fled through the Sacristy, out of the church and into the safety of his house, where he found his red setter dog cowering in the hall in terror.

It was not the sight of the dead priest or the sound of the opening doors which had frightened O'Flaherty, but the coffin he had seen supported seemingly on nothing, floating some two or three feet from the ground, towards the altar. O'Flaherty had noticed something else, too. The head of the coffin had been pointed toward the altar.





Which, in accordance with canonical custom, denoted that it contained the body of a priest!

The next morning, as he inspected the firm locks on the heavy church doors, O'Flaherty felt tempted to dismiss his experience as hallucination. But he remembered how Father Damien had struggled up in his death-bed, trying to say something in his last moments. Troubled and afraid of being taken for an impressionable hysteric, O'Flaherty very reluctantly took his story to the Bishop.

Dr. Lyons listened gravely and took down a verbatim and still surviving account of the whole affair. Over the next few weeks, he enquired closely into the circumstances of Father Damien's death and funeral.

It was the custom in Irish churches for the body of a dead parish priest to be brought to his own church and left before the altar for the entire night preceding burial.

But, in this case and unknown to the Bishop, the usual ritual had not been followed. Father O'Flaherty had been appointed Parish Priest *before* Father Damien's death. So the old man had been buried without the customary rest in his own church. There had been an administrative blunder.

Gravely, Dr. Lyons told Father O'Flaherty: "I want you to pray every night in the church for Father Damien's soul . . . and wait."

Some time passed and nothing happened. Then one warm Sunday evening in July, O'Flaherty was in the church. The congregation had departed and the priest was alone.

All at once, the church glowed in a ray of light more powerful than any sunshine. Father O'Flaherty had never really felt at ease in the church which seemed to be in permanent mourning for its former priest, but suddenly he was filled with an unaccountable happiness and peace. He had heard the click of the doors and had felt no fear. Calmly he turned and saw the coffin, again suspended on air, waiting patiently for him.

As if it was the most natural thing in the world, O'Flaherty made his way to the Sacristy. He put on his vestments, took a phial of holy water, then turned and walked towards the coffin. After he had intoned the prayers, O'Flaherty knelt beside the coffin with bowed

head. All he heard was a gentle swish, followed by the then familiar click of the door. Eventually, the priest returned to the Sacristy. He had not troubled to look at the coffin again even out of wonder. He knew there was no need.

Neither Bishop nor parish priest could, of course, be absolutely sure that the phantom coffin had belonged to Father Damien. But Father O'Flaherty was to remember for the rest of his life the image of the dying old man which had flashed through his mind after the coffin's first appearance. Or the pleading way in which the ghost had looked at him in the church. O'Flaherty, at least, had no doubts as to who had been the owner of the coffin. As if to confirm his knowledge, he later recalled how, after he had given the coffin Absolution, all fear had swept away from him.

## WEIRD ECHOES OF THE MIND

The compere came forward to the footlights and held his hands high in a gesture for silence. The audience settled back and he allowed the silence to linger for a moment. When he spoke his voice was serious and grave.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, we come to a unique experience. Robert Maris will demonstrate his amazing powers of telepathy and clairvoyance. He will prove to you the incredible power of the mind! He will be blindfolded on this stage while his assistant moves among you. If you would kindly hand her any object with some personal significance Robert Maris will identify it—and he will also tell you secrets about yourselves.

"In this performance, ladies and gentlemen, I must ask for your complete silence and co-operation . . ."

There was a roll of drums and Robert Maris appeared in a single spotlight. Melissa placed the blindfold and moved down to the audience. Smiling, she accepted a number of objects from the audience and then selected a faded photograph. Then she turned towards the stage: "Maestro, what have I in my hand?"





Maris waited a moment to allow the tension to rise. The form of the question was the clue. By using different forms of address and questions it was possible to indicate hundreds of different items.

"You have a photograph," his voice was quiet, but distinct in the silence.

"Can you, perhaps, tell me anything about it?" Melissa picked her words carefully.

"Yes," Maris paused. "I see a man—aged about fifty. Grey hair, pleasant features—he is the one in the photograph."

Melissa glanced at the woman who had handed her the photograph. The woman was smiling, but there were tears in her eyes. Melissa smiled too . . . for it was a good beginning to their performance.

"Come, there must be more you can tell us!" Maris smiled behind the blindfold. Melissa was very good—she had a flair for picking out widows or the recently bereaved. It always made a great impression when handled properly. He paused and pitched his voice deeper.

"There is something coming to me. Someone is speaking from the other side. His voice is low . . ."

Melissa glanced at the back of the photograph and saw the name. She spoke loudly. "There must be more, surely?"

"His name is Frank." Maris said. "He wishes to send his love to his dear wife who is here tonight!" The audience gasped at that and the woman stared eagerly towards the stage.

"He says," Maris continued. "That she must have no fear. He loves her still and watches over her day and night. They will meet again one day—they will be happy. He tells her to live a good life, to enjoy her life . . ."

The woman smiled with delight and the audience burst into a thunderous round of applause. Melissa raised her hand.

"Please, we must not break the maestro's concentration! He must have silence! Now, what have I here?"

Again, the form of the phrase gave the clue. It was a purse and from this point Melissa would use a variety of phrases which would tell him the contents of the purse

and anything necessary about the owner. Melissa repeated the question and he was about to speak when his concentration wavered. Something else came into his mind, a thought or an image, something he did not recognise and yet felt was important.

For a second, he lost the thread of the code. It was almost as if someone was whispering, confiding some secret. The audience waited, sensing some different pattern. Melissa repeated the question sharply. *"Now, what have I here?"*

She sounded worried and Maris shook his head. He murmured, trying to grasp reality. "A purse, a leather purse . . ."

Once he had the code he ran through the act with his usual skill and the momentary lapse was forgotten. The audience enjoyed it all immensely and their applause was long and generous.

As they left the stage Melissa looked at Maris strangely. "You had me worried there, Bob. But it was a pretty good move—it had them right on the edge of their seats."

"Well, you know how it is," Maris shrugged. "If it seems too slick people don't take it in."

Robert Maris was a performer. He enjoyed his work and by 1956 he had been reasonably successful during his thirty years in the theatre. He saw himself as an entertainer. He presented a polished act which certainly intrigued a good number of people—particularly in theatres such as this one in Silver Springs, South Australia. He tried to give the customers value for money and to leave them happy. He was a professional down to his fingertips—which was why he didn't care to examine the reasons for his brief lapse of concentration.

During the next performance a member of the audience handed Melissa a ring. As Maris was preparing to present the information in the most dramatic fashion, he experienced a strange sensation. His mind seemed to cloud. He heard a voice, but could not distinguish the words. He felt a presence, the impact of a powerful personality. Half-formed images loomed, filling his brain. Melissa waited and the audience grew restless. "Maestro—the object I have? *What is it?*"

Maris opened his mouth to speak—and the images in





his mind fused into startling reality. He felt weak, helpless, like a spectator at an accident, helpless to intervene and yet condemned to watch. He tried to turn away from the images of horror, but there was no escape!

"Listen!" His voice rang out, cracked and harsh. "There is tragedy! Death! The children are screaming, there is grief—the Earth is strangling them! They must be warned!"

The audience sat in silence and Melissa stared helplessly. The stage manager grunted from the wings. "What's that idiot trying to do—empty the theatre?"

Robert Maris swayed and pitched forward. The curtain dropped and the compere ran on. "Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise. The strain of communicating with the unknown has affected Robert Maris. Please be patient . . . the show continues with . . ."

The audience murmured in fascinated speculation. But one member of the audience rose quickly and moved out of the auditorium. Dan Carter, a reporter with a news agency, had a nose for a story. All his journalistic instinct told him there was a story here—maybe even a big one. He slipped backstage and found the dressing room. Melissa opened the door and smiled pleasantly when he introduced himself. Yet he thought he detected a flash of uncertainty in her eyes. "Mr. Maris is resting just now . . ."

"I can imagine," Dan said. "I was out front—that was quite a performance. I'd like to have a chat with him . . . maybe it's worth a paragraph or so . . ."

"That's nice, really—but he really is rather tried. Perhaps another time . . ."

There was a movement behind the girl and a voice called. "It's all right, Melissa. Come on in . . ."

Maris looked pale, but composed. The girl watched him closely and the reporter felt they had been talking or even arguing just before he appeared.

"You gave us quite a turn out there, Mr. Maris," said Carter. "I wondered what was happening, seemed interesting . . ."

"Not very," Maris shrugged. "The heat in there's quite something and I'm not as young as I was. I suppose I must have had a blackout or something."

"But the thing you said." Dan sprang the question. "That sounded like a warning. Just what did you mean?"

Again the girl glanced at Maris and Carter felt he was right—there was something.

"Some nonsense, I suppose." Maris hesitated. "As I said, the heat . . . I didn't know what I say saying . . ."

Melissa relaxed, but Maris suddenly waved the girl away as she moved forward, and turned to the reporter.

"No, that isn't right. Listen, I've got to tell somebody or I'll go out of my mind. I had some kind of premonition—it was crazy and frightening. Something was trying to tell me there's going to be a tragedy . . ."

Maris shook his head and sighed. He paused and seemed to see again an interior vision. "It was all there. Pictures, like on a cinema screen. People, children, screaming. The Earth smothering them . . . it was like a mine disaster . . ."

"You mean you had some sort of *spirit message?*" Dan said.

"I don't know what you'd call it. But it was there—it's here now, in the background. If I close my eyes I can see it all . . . it's driving me mad. It's a warning, somebody's trying to tell me . . ."

Carter probed further, trying to keep calm and yet impressed by the man's obvious fear and alarm. Maris simply repeated what he had said, and in saying it seemed to re-live a chapter of horror.

As he left, Dan was elated. Already the story was beginning to take on a form. It was a beauty—a natural. Apart from the chance of placing the story nationally it was just right for this part of the country which was largely a mining area. That fact would give the story added weight and impact.

Joe Baines, the editor, listened to the story a few days later, when Carter returned to his office in Sydney. When Dan finished he shook his head. "No good Dan. A load of hogwash—just can't be used . . .

"Look at the facts, son." The older man grunted. "A stage personality—a man who lives by illusions. What kind of evidence can you expect from a man like that? It's a publicity trick—if we use that story the theatre





will be packed to the doors. That's what he knows and what he wants."

Dan nodded, accepting the editor's reasoning. But he remembered the expression of horror on the face of Robert Maris. When he was describing his vision the horror seemed to become almost a reality. Either he was the greatest actor since Olivier or he believed what he was saying. "Okay, Joe. But do me one favour—meet Maris. Listen to what he has to say!"

The editor had the natural cynicism of newspapermen, but he allowed a meeting to be arranged. They met at a hotel and Maris explained that he had cancelled his stage appearances.

"I can't do it anymore." he said nervously. "It'll all happen again—I'm scared. Anything could happen . . ."

Baines grunted: "You're telling us you have some genuine gift? The act you do—all that's supposed to be telepathy or whatever?"

"Of course not." Maris shook his head wearily. "You know better than that. I'm an entertainer—that's all I've ever set out to be, but this is different. I can't even describe it. It's crazy but I can't escape it . . .

"You don't even have to mention my name," Maris said quickly. "Just say you've heard. I don't know—all I know is that something is trying to warn me . . . It must be for the people . . ."

"Tell me," Baines leaned forward. "Could you describe what it is you're suppose to be seeing?"

Maris shuddered and hesitated. "It's only too easy," he said. "It's there at the back of my mind the whole time. I try to ignore it, but I can't. I'd rather not know . . ."

He sat back in his chair and closed his eyes. As the two men watched, beads of sweat sprang on his brow, his jaw was tight, the muscles bunched and hard.

"Water . . ." he muttered. "Earth falling. Children screaming, men weeping. Sadness, grief . . . it's hell! Wait—a time . . . October . . . October twenty-one . . ."

He stopped and his eyes opened. His face was ashen, only his eyes showed any light. Joe Baines rose and gestured Dan to follow. He frowned and hestitated. He was a cynic, but he was not a fool. "Leave it with us, Mr. Maris. Maybe there's something we can do . . ."

As they left and walked in the bright sunshine Dan turned to the older man. "Well, you heard him, you saw him. Do you belive him?"

"I don't know." Joe Baines shrugged. "In a way, I'm forced to believe that he's had some kind of experience. One thing I do know—we can't ignore it."

"Do we send the story out, then?" Dan asked.

"No, he might be taking us for a ride or be wrong, anyway. One thing struck me though. All the things he said—they could all fit the nearby silver mine. There's a river there, they've got a whole community of families there and it is a mine. Then there's this date—October 21 . . ."

"Only three days away," Dan said quietly.

The two men were faced with an impossible dilemma. The story could be a hoax and to publish would be to create panic and possibly danger. On the other hand, if the story was true they had to act, to do something. Joe Baines decided to play it straight. He contacted the owners of the mine and told them what he had seen and heard. He felt foolish when telling the story—but he considered it his duty. The owners were polite, but as their managing director said: "We appreciate your concern, Mr. Baines. But think for one moment. We pride ourselves on safety conditions. We have qualified experts on our staff whose sole function in life is to ensure that our employees work in proper conditions. Then somebody has a dream and it's suggested that we stop production at the mine for one day—because that's what you're asking. If there was any proof, even the slightest, we'd go along with it. But because of this story . . ."

It was impossible to argue. Everything the mine owners said had made sense—better sense than anything Robert Maris had said. Yet there was the horror in his face, the panic in his voice that carried conviction. It was feeling against fact, a hunch against proof.

On the morning of October 21, 1956, three men gathered in the cold light of dawn on a hill overlooking the mine. A thin curtain of rain swept the scene and blurred the spiky outline of the mind. A hooter blared a melancholy note and tiny figures could be seen disappearing into the earth.





"Well, they're starting on schedule," Dan Carter said. "Normal routine . . ."

"It makes sense," Joe Baines grunted. "I sometimes think I must be getting old. Hanging around here this time in the morning . . ."

He paused and glanced at Robert Maris who was staring at the mine. Maris had been silent and withdrawn ever since they had met. He had aged in the past few days. He seemed thinner, more distant, as if absorbed in some private dream.

"This look anything like the place you saw in your dream or whatever it is?" Baines asked him.

"I don't know," Maris murmured. "It feels right. Yet the pictures aren't complete. I have a feeling that not everything has been shown—not yet. It's as if there's something still to be told . . . perhaps it will never be told. Perhaps we shall all see it . . ."

A silence fell. There was nothing to say. The waiting was a part of something, as if they were all actors in some drama, but a drama without a script. They, the actors, would not know the real story until the final curtain fell.

The sun rose slowly over the hills. The rain disappeared and the day grew warm. As time passed the two newspapermen relaxed. But Maris continued to stare into space, watchful, hardly moving, taut and concentrating. Sometimes, he muttered or held his head as if trying to blot out a picture—or perhaps to summon up a clearer vision.

Six hours later, Baines shrugged into action. "Well, I reckon we've allowed enough time for this performance. Doesn't look like the end of the world. Let's go!"

"Wait!" Maris said urgently. "There's still time. I don't know—I have a feeling I'm close to it . . . whatever it is."

Carter was tired and annoyed. It could have been the biggest story ever. Yet it hadn't made sense, not even from the beginning. He should have known, have used his commonsense. That was the worst thing—that he had been fooled, taken in.

"I'm sorry," Maris said as they climbed into the car. "I was telling the truth, you know."

"Sure, you believe it . . . I'll grant that."

"No, that's not what I mean," Maris said quickly. "I mean, it just hasn't happened yet, that's all. I can see it all in my mind—it's still there! Why would it be there unless it meant something?"

"Just because you think something doesn't make it a fact." Dan said tersely. "People have been known to have hallucinations, breakdowns . . ."

Maris sat silently and said nothing even when Dan dropped him at the hotel. The reporter watched him go and shrugged—just one of those things, a false lead.

"You've learned a valuable lesson," Baines said when Carter returned to the office. "Steer clear of cranks—this business attracts them. Mind you, he had me pretty well convinced and I should know better. I thought I was too old and too wise . . ."

From his hotel-room window Robert Maris stared at the dark sky. He felt tired and his head throbbed. "Mad?" he whispered. "Is that it—the answer? I wish it was, it would be simpler. But I can still hear them, the voices, the screams. I can feel their grief! Who are you? What do you want?"

Suddenly, the images returned, filling his mind. The Earth fell and the screams of terror pierced him like knives. There was water and pain and grief. And then he saw it all, the warning as it was meant to be.

The year—that was it. He grabbed a pencil and a writing pad and wrote it all down. 1966 . . . the disaster had not yet struck. He could wait and people would believe in time. He smiled, and at that moment a savage pain tore at his chest.

The inquest showed that Robert Maris had died of heart failure. Joe Baines and Dan Carter attended the funeral as a matter of courtesy. They felt some sense of guilt. Maris had lived in a private hell and they—they secretly felt—had perhaps encouraged his fantasy to the point where it was no longer bearable. There was no way of knowing. The story had ended with brutal finality.

Ten years later in 1966, Dan Carter had achieved an ambition and was working for a Fleet Street newspaper. One day he received an urgent call from his editor. "Carter, I want you to go down to a place in





Wales. Called Aberfan—there's been some sort of accident or disaster. Get moving! And contact me as soon as you arrive!"

The tragedy of Aberfan burst into the consciousness of the world and the grief of a tiny village was shared by millions. It was a story of almost unbearable poignancy—made infinitely worse because the victims were children.

For Dan Carter it had another significance. The date was October 21, 1966. The children had died because concealed water had caused a mountain to move and they were smothered beneath tons of earth. He remembered something from his past—the horror of a man called Robert Maris. The tragedy was as Maris had said, and had written down just before he died.

Since then Carter has often wondered—could it be that the tragedy of Aberfan might have been prevented? Was it possible that Robert Maris . . . a man who dealt in counterfeit visions . . . had known one single moment of terrifying truth?

## THE HORROR AT NUMBER 66 HOBS LANE

South of the River Thames, right in the heart of London, stand row upon row of enormous concrete structures. The modern multi-story flats house thousands of citizens, who live happily in these air-conditioned, centrally heated surroundings which have been set on the sites where their forebears dwelt for thousands of years. If you walk through these districts, you might think that all links with the past have been swept away as thoroughly as the builders swept away the jumble of old houses and tumbledown warehouses which occupied the site before Hitler's bombers began the demolition of this ancient corner of an ancient city. But you would be wrong. Many of the rigidly planned squares and vistas still bear the names of the thoroughfares and courts which they replaced. Some of them, that is, but not all.

Quite recently the London County Council, at the

persistent request of many tenants, changed one. And for a very good, but uncanny reason . . .

Although many of the modern areas have established characters of their own as popular rendezvous for teenagers, some are frequented chiefly by young mothers pushing prams, while others seem to attract mainly the elderly who come when the weather permits, to sun themselves on the benches provided for them, and nod away their declining years.

Yet one such precinct—formerly called Hobs Square—remains curiously empty, even on the warmest day. The location of the buildings around it seem to have robbed it of sunlight, and some days, the wind sharpened by its passage between the aero-dynamically designed buildings, seems to have a keener bite.

Hobs Square has a curious history. Before the Second World War the site was occupied by a small square of red brick houses slightly more affluent than those which leaned upon each other in nearby Hobs Lane. On the corner stood a large, three-story house with two frontages, one on the square, the other at right angles facing onto the lane. This was number 66—a typical house of its period, which had been built in 1823. It had voluminous cellar and attic accommodations, and a certain but indefinable, air of elegance. It had stood for over a hundred years with nothing to distinguish it from its neighbours except its two frontages. Then, in 1928, a curious sequence of events brought it brief notoriety.

It had been empty since the end of the Great War until it was bought by Charles Raymond, a fruit and vegetable merchant who had known and admired the house since his childhood. Raymond had it completely redecorated, and two months later he moved in with his wife, three children, a servant named Effie, and a Scottish cook-housekeeper, Mrs. Jean Baxter, who had been with the family for five years. No sooner had they moved in than the cook, whose kitchen was in the basement, began to have fits of depression. Her condition rapidly worsened and within a few months she suffered a severe mental breakdown, and left the Raymonds after a period in hospital.

After the housekeeper's departure, Mrs. Raymond de-





cided to attend to the catering herself with Effie's help until they could engage a new cook. But to her astonishment, Effie refused to go into the kitchen . . . and gave no reason for this, except for a look of absolute terror whenever the subject was broached.

Sheila Raymond's previous visits to the kitchen had been very brief, as the highly efficient Mrs. Baxter had made it very much her own province. On the morning after Mrs. Baxter's departure to the hospital, however, Sheila was searching for some pans when she heard a movement behind her. Effie, pale and distraught, was standing in the center of the room. Mrs. Raymond expressed her surprise at seeing the girl in the kitchen in view of her absolute refusal to enter the room earlier. She had come to help she said, because it was bad for Mrs. Raymond to be there by herself. Touched by the girl's concern—which in view of subsequent events demonstrated great courage—Sheila sat her at the table, quickly made two cups of cocoa, took a seat by Effie and tried to discover the reason for Effie's nervousness.

Ten minutes later, unable to break down the girl's reluctance to talk, Sheila began to prepare lunch. She soon became aware of an unpleasant smell. Simultaneously Effie seized her and attempted to drag her from the kitchen. Astonished and seriously concerned by the girl's distressed condition, Sheila called for her husband and together they carried the girl up the stairs to the dining room. There she recovered enough to tell them that ever since their arrival in the house, the stench in the kitchen had manifested itself frequently—although sometimes as long as a week would elapse between visitations. Apparently it had caused Mrs. Baxter's breakdown, and Effie was convinced that it would affect them all if they stayed.

Charles Raymond, at 43, was a solid, unimaginative man who had survived the horrors of the Western front with his sense of proportion unimpaired. He was certainly not a man to be stampeded into action by a hysterical girl. Yet he was so impressed by Effie's evident sincerity in attributing the collapse of the indomitable Mrs. Baxter to the smell in the cellar, that he immediately

returned to the kitchen. Five minutes later, he was back, white and shaken.

On entering the kitchen everything had appeared to be normal, the sun was streaming down through the barred window and the fire crackling in the stove. He walked round the room sniffing, but could detect no unusual odours, although his sense of smell was part of his stock in trade. Standing by the window he was looking carefully into the basement area when his nostrils were assailed by the odour of putrefaction. Faint at first, then stronger, it increased in intensity until he almost gagged, and an overpowering feeling of terror crept over him; and he fled from the room.

This war veteran, whose nerve had sustained him through months of danger and discomfort, surrounded by the rotting corpses of friends and enemy soldiers was so shaken by his experience in a sunny London kitchen at half-past eleven one July morning, that within hours he had left the house in Hobbs Lane.

The next morning, he returned with three workmen. They descended to the basement kitchen and stripped it. Every stick of furniture was removed, the panelling of the window-shutter boxes was ripped out and the stove dismantled, yet nothing was uncovered. So he ordered the ceiling to be taken down; the flagstones on the floor were prized up and the earth beneath was thoroughly probed, yet nothing was found. They checked the drains and the gas pipes, inspected the basement area and shovelled aside half a ton of coal to ensure that every square inch of the cellar area was examined, yet nothing was discovered to account for the smell.

At four o'clock they had conceded defeat and were preparing to leave when the odour suddenly swept over them . . . it spread quickly through the kitchen and every man experienced a numbing sense of horror that he could not afterwards define. Raymond had directed the day's operations and had been hoping for the re-appearance of the odour, determined that this time he would track the horrifying smell to its source. But on this occasion as before, his determination was no match for the terror which spread through his mind like ink





on a blotting pad and he rushed up the stairs after the other men. He never entered the house again.

The story spread quickly and several journalists attempted to rationalise the events, and between them spent hours in the cellar kitchen. It defeated them all when it appeared. Nobody could withstand the feeling of induced horror.

A study was made of the area by city engineers and the health authorities with no result. It was accepted that no theory of bad drains, old dumps or gas leaks would support the facts.

A vicar travelled up from Devon to exorcise the house without success. A host of cranks, genuine spiritualists and mediums of various credibility attempted to find the answer, but eventually gave up. A party of university students sat all through the night in the cellar without discomfort only to leave it in panic three minutes after the odour manifested itself, shortly after nine o'clock the next morning.

It attracted the attention of leading figures in the field of psychic research. And in 1929, several attempts were made to investigate the facts scientifically. The cellar was checked, then sealed, then checked again. Instruments were installed and either nothing happened, or the human operators were driven out by the thing they could neither see nor hear, feel nor record. Every attempt failed.

Public interest in the Raymond's house of horror waned and the whole thing became a seven day wonder. The house remained empty for nearly six years, then became a warehouse, until it was destroyed by a bomb in the blitz of 1940. When the site was cleared after the war, public interest stimulated by an enterprising reporter flared momentarily, but it was all idle speculation. Nothing was found to account for the horror in the cellar of number 66.

But it is a curious fact that in the modern commercial and residential complex of identical squares and towering multi-story blocks of flats, of cliff-like office blocks and stone-flagged, flower-lined courtyards, the only square which is not thronged with people in the

summer and which appears more desolate than most in the winter, is the one that covers the site that was once known as number 66 Hobs Lane.

## THE AMULET FROM THE WIVES OF MAHOMET ABU

The bracelet looked harmless enough, but it was hardly the sort of thing Genevieve Barron would have picked for her newly-born baby to wear. It was made from some sort of coarse black hair, and it certainly wasn't pretty. In the first place she felt certain that it wasn't hygienic, and secondly, it gave off the most terrible smell. However, as the other two "wives" had presented it to her as a good luck charm for her newly-born daughter in March, 1963, she didn't want to seem ungrateful by refusing to let them fasten it to the child's wrist. After all, *they* believed that it would "ward off evil spirits and protect her from harm."

Genevieve accepted the situation; just as she had accepted all the other curious customs and habits she had faced up to since she fell in love with the Ghanian student, Mahomet Abu. They had met at a medical school in Paris, where they were both students—and Genevieve was attracted to him from the very beginning. He had seemed so much gentler than the French boys. Gentle, yet with a definite air of authority which was understandable in the son of a high-ranking government official, who was the descendant of a long line of African warrior chiefs.

When Genevieve took him home to meet her family in a small provincial French town, it caused quite a stir. "But she never said her boyfriend was *coloured!*" whispered her sister. "She can't be *seriously* thinking of marrying him!" Her widowed mother only wanted her daughter's happiness, and as Abu seemed to be a very nice pleasant man, she hoped that he would make a good husband.

Genevieve's sister, Brigitte, however, was absolutely against it. She was married to a prosperous baker and





she told Genevieve absolutely outright: "If you marry *that* man, don't ever expect to be welcome in my house! I will never condone it. And don't expect me to have anything more to do with you!"

But two years later, Abu finished his medical studies—and he and Genevieve were married. They left almost immediately for his home in Ghana, and it was there that Genevieve received her first surprise. The house that Abu had inherited from his father was certainly large enough, with every modern convenience. But Abu had never mentioned to Genevieve that she would be wife number three: she had no idea that he had married two African wives before he went to Paris. And there were also three children!

Genevieve found herself the favoured new wife, and the other two wives completely accepted the fact that they had been replaced by her. This had always been the way in their country, and since they still had a security of a nice home, plenty to eat, and beautiful clothes, they were perfectly happy just seeing to the household tasks and bringing up their children. They made the bewildered Genevieve completely at home and when she was expecting her first baby, they showered her with presents and advice. Communication was not difficult, as they had been taught English. But although they were absorbing European ideas, they still clung to many of their old belief and superstitions.

So a daughter was born to Genevieve and the other two wives immediately insisted that Genevieve fastened the bracelet which they had bought from a witchdoctor to the baby's wrist.

Life went on in leisurely fashion after that in the big house with its spacious grounds full of flowering bushes, until one day, Abu returned from a trip to a doctor's convention and said that he was taking a *fourth* wife! The first two congratulated him, but Genevieve did not join in. She remained in the background, holding her three-year-old daughter, feeling absolutely stunned.

The new young wife duly arrived and Genevieve saw less and less of Abu. It was a situation she could not endure, so finally she wrote to her mother in France and said that she would be returning home with the baby.

By the time Genevieve had made her arrangements to leave Ghana, her sister, Brigitte had died. At the last moment, Genevieve told the first and second wife that she was leaving for France. They both begged her to stay, but Genevieve had made up her mind.

One morning, when Abu had left for his surgery in the town, she slipped away with her luggage and her daughter. That was when she tried to return the bracelet.

"Do keep the amulet we gave you," begged the wives. "Put it on the child's wrist and she will never come to harm." The tears streamed down their cheeks as they waved goodbye, and Genevieve knew that she couldn't refuse. But on the voyage back to France, she removed the bracelet.

Back in France, Genevieve's family welcomed her with open arms, and the late Brigitte's husband said they could live in his house, as he was going to work in North Africa. So Genevieve and the little girl, Stella, moved into the house by the bakery. It was a very cool, dark and silent house. The child Stella, was given the room that had been her aunt's, and her mother slept in the adjoining room.

On the first night in the strange house, Stella woke up, startled by a strange tapping noise in the room which sounded as if someone was walking with a stick. Then the bed began to tremble and the clothes slid suddenly to the floor, as if pulled by some unseen hand. Frightened, the little girl jumped out of her bed and ran into her mother's room.

The next night, Genevieve put Stella to bed as usual. The child hadn't told her mother about the strange noises, but when they began again, she called out. Genevieve went to see what was the matter, thinking she must be having a bad dream; but, as she came into the room, she actually saw the covers being pulled from the bed. Stella sat there shivering, frightened by the unknown, as both her mother and she listened to the sound of a tapping stick moving from the bedroom and along the passage.

The next day, Genevieve told her mother about the strange noises. Her mother listened, then confessed that it was Brigitte's "ghost." She told me the day before she





died that on no account must you bring your child to her house. She warned me that she would haunt the place."

Genevieve knew her mother had always believed in ghosts, but to actually hear this was rather a shock. Yet it would seem like admitting defeat if she moved out of the house, but what could she do? She couldn't have her sister's ghost frightening Stella. As she went back to the house, she suddenly remembered the African women in Ghana, who had pleaded that Stella should always wear the strange bracelet. So she unpacked it from the suitcase where she had put it, and put it back on her daughter's wrist. After that, she had no more trouble with her sister's ghost.

## A VOYAGE INTO THE MOUTH OF HELL

The merchant ship *Bacchante* was Melbourne bound and on the first half of its long trip round the Cape of Good Hope. The crew had been prepared for bad weather, but none of them had ever experienced such a tempestuous sea, known such darkness, or heard such howling winds.

Both the captain and the crew knelt on the deck in prayer, pleading for a new day that seemed reluctant to appear. High above them a lookout man clung to the cross-trees of the foretop mast, trying in vain to see through the all-enveloping gloom.

Suddenly a light appeared on the horizon. For a second the lookout thought it was the dawn . . . then realised that it couldn't have been. It was directly south. The strange red glow grew brighter and more dazzling directly in the path of the *Bacchante*, until it was almost as if they were sailing directly into the mouth of Hell. And perhaps they were. The lookout gave a scream of terror! Right in the center of the brilliant red flame he could see another vessel . . . the most notorious ghost ship in the world—the *Flying Dutchman*. Through the glow and standing out in sharp relief, its masts, spars and sails were soon clearly discernable about two hundred yards away.

The lookout clung to the rigging for several moments, staring incredulously at this sight, then his arm flew up as in a gesture of surrender—and he crashed to his death on the deck below.

The rest of the crew huddled together on the deck—united in a terrible foreboding. But after a while, as if satisfied with the night's work, the strange ship sounded three bells and vanished. The red glow of sea and sky was switched off abruptly. It was not until several hours later and after the dawn was well advanced, that Larsen, Captain of the *Bacchante*, was able to persuade his crew to continue with the voyage.

But before many hours had passed, a new horror was discovered. An admiral who had been a passenger on the *Bacchante* was discovered dead in his bunk. The rigid body and the horrifying expression on the corpse's face all indicating a man who had died of extreme fear. His body lay near the porthole above his bunk, through which seemingly the Admiral had witnessed the indescribable.

Captain Larsen told the story of that voyage many times, and his narrative received a sage nod from veteran mariners and the comment: "You have seen the *Flying Dutchman*". Eventually, Larsen was told the legend, and he wrote in the 1881 log of the *Bacchante*: "The *Flying Dutchman* crossed our bows. Thirteen in all saw her."

What was the story of the *Flying Dutchman*? What had led her perturbed spirit to wander the seas, bringing disaster to any other vessel who sighted her?

In the mid-1600s there was no more feared and hated sea captain than the fiery Cornelius Vanderdecken. He had a reputation for being utterly merciless, both to any ship he commanded, and to their crews. Once assigned to a vessel, he had no other interest or purpose than to complete the voyage. In pursuit of what became an obsession, he would push his ship through the vilest storms, riding seas whose ferocity threatened eventual destruction. A blasphemer and a braggart, Vanderdecken once announced: "Neither God nor man is going to drive me from any ship I command. I would rather confine the Deity to Hell than ever meet defeat."





On that fateful voyage, Vanderdecken had set sail for Holland from Batavia. All went peacefully until the *Flying Dutchman* reached the Cape of Good Hope. Then the start of the curse that this luckless ship was to visit on others struck from a seemingly innocent sky. Violent headwinds buffeted the *Flying Dutchman*.

For nine nerve-wracking weeks, Vanderdecken and and exhausted crew urged on the ship, but in vain. The winds made her as immobile as a fly in amber. Vanderdecken whipped himself into a fury that terrified his crew even more than the storm. In frustration, he flung himself on the deck and in a parody of prayer called down the aid of the Devil to get him round the Cape. As if stung by this enraged pact with evil, the winds rose even higher and shrieked through the boat's rigging, contemptuously tossing the already battered hulk on the rolling surface of the sea.

Suddenly, from the inky blackness, a brilliant red light bathed itself on the poop of the ship. The sailors sank to their knees, prostrate before a dazzling figure which materialised before them. Some took it for an angel, some for the Holy Ghost. But to all it was a message of hope, a gentle spirit which had come to bring calmness amid the raging holocaust. To all that is, except Vanderdecken, who stood his ground, a string of blasphemies pouring from his lips. The ghostly figure paid no attention. To the crew it was a friendly presence which bade them to stay level-headed and unafraid.

A shot rang out, as Vanderdecken fired at the spirit and ordered it to quit his ship at once. The bullet passed straight through the spectre. And then, so the legend went, it spoke:

"Vanderdecken, you have made a pact with the Devil to complete this voyage. You shall spend Eternity with the powers of darkness.

"You will sail the Seven Seas for ever. The curse you have poured on me has now sealed the fate of your crew. Anyone who sees the words *Flying Dutchman* on the side of this ship will henceforth die."

The ghost then reputedly vanished. The storm, as if impatient to resume, fell with renewed fury on the *Flying Dutchman* and it never reached its destination.

Is the story nothing, but a romantic legend? Perhaps. Yet two men died on the *Bacchante* two hundred years later—two men who had seen something which had frozen them with terror. Had they both seen the words *Flying Dutchman*? If so, was this the final appearance of Vanderdecken's doomed ship? In 1911, a whaler named the *Orkney Belle* sighted a phantom vessel off Rejkavik. The crew later described her giant sails, which swelled in non-existent breezes. Her bows almost rammed the side of the whaler. Several of the crew claimed to have seen the words *Flying Dutchman* before three bells tolled mournfully and the ghostly visitant heeled to starboard and vanished. A year later, the *Orkney Belle* fell victim to a German destroyer.

There have been no recent recorded sightings of the *Flying Dutchman*. Perhaps the heavenly powers have relented, perhaps the shade of Vanderdecken has been made harmless. On the other hand, the curse could be as strong as ever, stretching down the centuries with its old potency.

Maybe someday the crew of a nuclear submarine will see first on their radar screens and then on their periscopes a strange ship of sail that has clearly emblazoned on it the dreaded name. But before that, they will, if they are wise, have looked away. For the sight of the words *Flying Dutchman* could still mean death. Captain Cornelius Vanderdecken—the Faust of the Cape of Good Hope—could, after three hundred years, still be afloat.

## DEATH WARNING FROM A MISTED MIRROR

Quentin Lloyd woke up suddenly and stared about his hotel room. A few seconds earlier, he had been in a sound sleep, a much needed sleep. But what had roused him? Certainly there wasn't a sound to be heard in the hotel and even the normally busy Edinburgh main road beneath his window was as silent as the grave at six o'clock on that October morning in 1962. In the distance he could hear the muffled chimes as a clock struck the





hour. And that was when the uncanny, persistent feeling began—the feeling that there was somebody else in the room; that he was being watched!

Feeling rather annoyed at having his sleep disturbed, Lloyd left his bed and crossed to the window. Outside, the first greyness of the new day was beginning to show. Then, certain that someone was standing just behind him, Lloyd suddenly swung round—but there was only his own reflection staring back at him from the mirror.

He sighed with relief, then—in sudden surprise—he peered more closely at the mirror, for he had never seen such a clear, vivid reflection. Every line and pinpoint bristle on his face was visible, it was almost as though the reflection was more real than he was himself. Then the mirror began to cloud over and his face disappeared. Hardly daring to move, Lloyd kept on staring. A strange face appeared . . . the face of a man with thick black hair, and a large dark moustache with a deep cleft in his chin.

Lloyd was horrified. He turned around, for a moment thinking that the stranger was standing behind him. But he was still alone. Fascinated, he turned back to the mirror. The strange face was still there, but it had become even more terrifying, for there was a terrible injury above the stranger's eye. His face had become that of a dead man! Then the vision faded as unexpectedly as it had come, the fine mist once again clouded the glass for a few seconds and Lloyd saw his own frightened face gradually re-appearing.

Later that morning at breakfast, he questioned the maid about the room in which he had spent the night. He had expected to hear some gruesome story connected with the room, for he was certain that he had seen a ghost. But he was disappointed. The maid knew of no strange happening in the room and assured Lloyd that none of the other guests had ever complained about the room.

Finally, he decided that he must have dreamed the whole affair and left to join the coach that was to take him on his journey to London. But before doing so, he crept unobtrusively back to the bedroom and examined the mirror again.

The room did not seem as eerie in the daylight, and the mysterious mirror had an air of stark normality about it. But as he was about to leave, he noticed the fine mist beginning to cloud the glass. As before, his own reflection disappeared and that of the dark-haired man reappeared. It was, without a doubt, the same face that he had seen earlier. As he stared, the head began to shake slowly, as though warning Lloyd against doing something. Then the dreadful injury once more appeared above the man's eye, his face "died" again and then disappeared. Lloyd could find no explanation for the phenomena, so he fled from the room.

The coach was just pulling into the forecourt of the hotel as he ran out into the bright sunlight, snatched up his suitcase and prepared to board. Then he looked at the driver, and gave a cry of terror. For the black hair, the bushy moustache were all there . . . the driver's face was the one he had seen in the bedroom mirror! The man was laughing and joking with his passengers, trying to hurry them into their seats. Lloyd looked at him closely . . . there was no sign of any injury on the driver's forehead.

Suddenly he felt sure the face in the mirror had been some kind of warning. Without explanation he leapt off the bus, although he knew that his journey would now be delayed by twelve hours.

Three hours later, Lloyd was sitting in the hotel bar when the maid rushed in:

"There's been the most terrible accident!" she burst out. "The coach that left this morning, the one you didn't catch . . . it's crashed! And the driver and ten passengers have been killed!"

Lloyd later realised that the ghost had warned him of the pending disaster. And his conviction was even greater when one of the more fortunate passengers returned to the hotel that evening and explained what had happened.

"The driver didn't have a chance," said the other man. "When we reached him he was already dead . . . the shaft of the steering column had smashed against his head and made a hole right above his eye."





## ATTACKED BY THE FANGS OF AN INVISIBLE MONSTER

It was a sultry May evening in 1951, and the Manila police patrols were expecting trouble. There was the smell of it in the air and it was as safe a prediction as the storm warning which was being made by the distant rumble of the approaching thunderstorm. That was why a patrol car sped instantly along the main street when they received a message that a crowd was gathering outside one of the waterfront bars. The car skidded to a stop as a terrified scream rang out. Forcing their way through the watching crowd, the constables saw a girl rolling about on the ground. She was shouting: "Keep it away from me! Keep it away . . . Oh, please, won't *some*one help me? I can't stand the pain!"

But there was nothing anybody could do, for there was no one anywhere near the girl—yet the shocked policemen clearly saw teeth marks appearing on the girl's arms and neck. As nobody else moved to help her, the crowd just watched in superstitious horror, the constables sprang forward and carried the frantically struggling girl into the car, manacled her—and drove at top speed all the way to headquarters.

All during the journey she fought against the manacles screaming and sobbing: "Please call The Thing off. It's biting me to death. I can't stand it any more . . ."

But there was little the policeman could do, in fact, there was nothing anybody at headquarters could do, but summon the police doctor. At first, they suspected that the girl, Clarita Villaneuva, had been taking drugs or drinking. But there was a more macabre, inexplicable reason for it all. A reason so fantastic that, at first it even fooled the police medical officer, Dr. Marianna Lara, who gave her one quick look and snapped: "She's having an epileptic fit."

The policemen next took Clarita to a cell, ignoring her pleas not to leave her alone. As the cell door slammed, Clarita collapsed to the floor sobbing bitterly.

A few minutes later, she started screaming uncontrollably and this time two policemen came running. The distraught girl moaned to them: "The Thing is coming at me. It's coming through the cell door as if it weren't there." Whatever "It" was, looked like a man, she claimed, but it had big bulging eyes and wore a cape over its shoulders. And it could float in mid air!

The policemen let themselves into the cell, but they could see nothing. All they could do was try to calm the girl. Yet, even as they watched, more and more bite marks began appearing on her arms. This time, the policemen decided to send for the chief of police, the mayor, and, once again the medical officer, Dr. Lara. They arrived and everybody agreed that the bites could not *possibly* have been self-inflicted for no one could bite herself on the back of the shoulders. Yet Clarita clearly *was* being bitten there!

Eventually, the exhausted girl fell asleep and in the morning she had to appear in court to face charges of vagrancy. But just as she was being taken into the court, she screamed that "The Thing" was back. The two policemen beside her saw teeth marks, deep and painful looking on her arms, hands and neck. Several newspaper reporters, court officials and Dr. Lara also stared at them in sheer astonishment. For five terrifying minutes the attack went on until Clarita fell unconscious to the floor. Then the amazed medical officer carried out an on-the-spot examination and found himself baffled! "These bites are genuine," he told the reporters. "And they are *not* self-inflicted!"

The reporters knew they were on to a great story and rushed to catch their editions. Half-an-hour later, Mayor Arsenio Lacson arrived and spoke to Clarita, whose arms and hands were badly swollen by then. Mayor Lacson decided to ride in the ambulance with the medical officer, Lara, and see that nothing more happened to the unfortunate girl. But even in the ambulance, she shouted once again that "The Thing" was after her. Only on this occasion there were two of the creatures—both *with the same large, staring eyes.* Both the mayor and the doctor said on oath that they watched as vicious-looking teeth marks came up on both sides of the girl's





throat and her hands—even as the mayor was holding them in an effort to comfort her.

It took fifteen minutes for the ambulance to reach the hospital—and to Lacson they were the longest fifteen minutes of his life. It seemed more like 24 hours in Hell, he said afterwards. Strangely, once the girl was in hospital, the attacks ceased and although she was guarded night and day nothing ever happened. She recovered and was released from the hospital six weeks later.

Dr. Lara, once sceptical, was now deeply interested in the case and recorded: "What happened to Clarita Villaneuva is a complete mystery, something which defies description.

"She was repeatedly attacked by something with invisible sharp fangs. We shall never know what it was, but I don't mind admitting that I was scared stiff."

And even today, Clarita still has bite marks all over her body . . . evidence that the impossible was, unhappily, *possible!*

## HIS DREAMS WERE NIGHTMARES—FOR OTHER PEOPLE

In a fantastic series of sweet dreams that gave the bookmakers nightmares, the young Honourable John Godley dreamed about winners—and backed them!

It started one Friday evening in March, 1946, when John Godley was an undergraduate at Oxford University. He had been out rowing on the river with some friends, a pastime he indulged in quite regularly. They had been doing nothing out of the ordinary, and when Godley parted from his companions for the night, the only thing he recalled was that he was feeling rather tired. He went to bed immediately and fell into a deep sleep. That was when his first remarkable dream occurred.

He dreamed that he was reading the racing results in a newspaper. The paper was the following day's edition, and the names of two winners caught his attention. They were Bindal and Juladin. Next morning he told

his friends, but they did not have much faith in his dream and refused to back them. However, Godley did as soon as he read that the horses were among the probable starters for that afternoon. Bindal won the 2.30; Juladin the 4.00.

Some weeks later the case—a sensational one—was reported to and examined by the Society for Psychical Research, who came away convinced that Godley's dream had been genuine.

Luckily for Godley there were more dreams on the way. His next winner was a horse called Tuberose. But, to be fair, the name he saw in the dream paper was *Tubermore!* Godley had that dream while at his home near the village of Killashandra in Ireland. He backed Tuberose with the help of Mrs. McGuinness, the Postmistress at Carrigallen, a village nearby.

He explained at the time: "We live five miles from Killashandra and the *London Times* arrives two days late. The *Irish Times* is delivered any time on the day of issue. Thus I could not have had any previous knowledge that a horse with a name like Tubermore was likely to run."

To get more up-to-date information regarding the runners that afternoon, Godley telephoned Mrs. McGuinness who was, like many of the Irish, keen on racing, and asked her if she knew anything about a horse called Tubermore. She replied that there was no Tubermore running, but there *was* a horse called Tuberose in the first at Aintree. Godley took the hint, backed it—and again was on a winner.

Perhaps the strangest dream of all came on July 28, 1946. This time he dreamt that he was walking to Oxford's Randolph Hotel with the intention of telephoning his bookmaker. It was a disjointed sort of dream and after several breaks, Godley found himself in a telephone box outside the Randolph. From there he phoned the bookie, who told him that the last race had been won by Monumentor, a 5-4 shot.

Next morning, Godley went through the probable runners and found no trace of a horse called Monumentor. The probable favourite for the last race at Worcester was Mentores. Once again, the eager Godley saw that both





horses had "mentor" in their name. He took the tip, but this time he was leaving nothing to chance. Godley decided he would re-enact the dream down to the most minute detail. So after placing his bet, he walked to the telephone box outside the Randolph Hotel and rang the bookie for the result of the last race. Back came the reply: "Mentores at 6-4".

By this time, news had gotten around of Godley's uncanny winner-finding dreams. He became known as the "man who dreamed winners" and all sorts of theories and explanations were put forward. The most baffled of all was Godley himself, but—naturally—he had no complaints.

For a while the dreams stopped. Then almost a year later he dreamed two winners in a night. In his dream, he saw a horse streak home well ahead of the field and he recognised the colours of that great racing man, the Gaekwar of Baroda. The jockey was the Australian, Edgar Britt. Almost before Britt had time to weigh in, the dream switched to the next race. This time, Godley clearly heard the crowd shouting that the favourite had gone in. "The Bogie has won," they shouted happily.

In the morning papers, Godley soon found that the Gaekwar of Baroda had a horse called Barado Squadron running at Lingfield. The next race included The Brogue, which Godley took as near enough a likeness to The Bogie. He backed both. It goes almost without saying that they both won. People were still trying to knock down the dreams of the young Irishman. Although winner after winner came from those dreams, there were many who called him a fake, a hoaxer.

In the end a London newspaper sent a man down to interview Godley to check on his dreams. Together they decided on a test. Godley was to put a sealed account of his next dream in the post office safe. The postmaster and the newspaperman were to be witnesses. He did so and waited for the racing results. The following morning the sealed envelope was opened . . . *the horse named there had won.*

As a result of the publicity which followed, Godley was taken on by a popular newspaper as a racing tipster. He had several other successes, but then the flow of

dreams dried up—just as suddenly as they had begun. Godley was disappointed, but he could offer no explanation. However, one thing is certain. If he ever starts dreaming winners again, the bookmakers will have nightmares!

## COLLISION WITH A GHOST PLANE

Flying Officer Bill Rose had become a legend in a fighter squadron that was a legend in its own right. His cool, daredevil behaviour in combat had already earned him the reputation of a man without nerves . . . and certainly there was nothing to worry him about the comparatively simple job of bringing his Hurricane in to land. He had done so countless times before, and even when his plane had been practically shot to pieces by enemy fire, he had never crashed. So on that September evening in 1942 there was nothing that could possibly go wrong. Or so it seemed.

Just as he was levelling out, an old-fashioned World War One veteran bi-plane careered wildly across the spotlighted runway. Rose had to pull wildly at the joystick in a desperate attempt to avoid collision and to attain the necessary height to clear. He muttered angrily as he missed a crash by inches, circled the airfield and then made a second attempt to land, this time without any trouble.

Rose was the second member of the Hurricane squadron to spot the "ghost plane" since they had arrived at the North of Scotland base for the rest two weeks earlier. But when Sergeant Pilot Jim Mahoney had reported it, he was told: "It's just your imagination, old chap. After all, like the rest of us, you had a rough time in the Battle of Britain. Your nerves are playing you up."

Now Rose had seen the ghost plane. He was one of those devil-may-care types who had no nerves. He had been up on a routine patrol and hadn't come within a dozen miles of an enemy aircraft. His nerves were rock steady as he tried to make his first landing.





"There's something strange out on that runway," Rose reported to his C.O. "Mahoney saw it, too . . . We can't both be wrong."

In the Mess that night, the pilots agreed to try to find out more about the mystery plane when they went to the nearby Aberdeenshire village on the weekend. They were not without success. After some discreet questioning, one local man replied: "That was just the ghost plane that you saw.

"He often flies at night, has done so for years. Strange that he never lands, but we are used to seeing the plane. They tell me it's what you call a Tiger Moth."

More investigations only deepened the mystery. The older locals claimed that the plane was the ghost of one which had crashed in flames on the edge of the perimeter in the First World War. Farmhands Sandy Jameson and Bill Miller saw the crash . . . and they told the pilots even more.

"I was just eighteen at the time," said Sandy, "and was round that way with Bill on the lookout for a few rabbits when this plane came spluttering in.

"We knew it was in trouble all right, and we could see the pilot working like mad as he tried to reach the runway. At first, we thought that he was going to make it, but at the last moment the wings dipped, touched the wire fence surrounding the field . . . and that was that."

Miller then took up the story. "We tried to get the pilot out, but it was hopeless. The heat was so terrific we could not get near the plane."

For a moment or two, Miller hesitated, then he went on: "You know, Sandy or myself didn't tell anyone at the time, but something very strange happened.

"As we watched the pilot struggling to free himself, he suddenly seemed to float out of the plane up into the air and as we watched, the terror on his face changed to happiness. *Then he vanished!*

"Sandy and myself were going to tell all this, but we decided to keep quiet when the remains of the pilot were found in the burnt-out wreckage of the plane."

The Hurricane pilots were by this time even more interested. Two of them were detailed to look up the files in the local newspapers. What they read made the

squadron even more convinced that perhaps there was a ghost plane after all—*flown by a ghost with a grudge!* An inquiry into the crash revealed that it need never have happened. The Tiger Moth had run out of fuel after a short routine flight out over the North Sea. A careless maintenance crew had forgotten to fill up the tank.

"A capable and experienced pilot died through the negligence of others," the inquiry concluded.

The next meeting came sooner than any of the Hurricane pilots expected. Two nights later, a Hurricane went up to head off an intruding Heinkel and having done so was returning to base. Squadron Leader Jim Dryden, in the control tower that night, tells the rest. He recalled: "There was a twin row of glim lamps along the grass to guide in Dick Fox, an old hand at the game, not over imaginative, but very reliable.

"We watched the glow of the exhaust as the Hurricane crossed the boundary. The pilot just touched down—then, with a roar, the engine opened up and shot back up into the night sky.

"As he was coming in for his second attempt it happened again.

"But now Fox was talking to us on the radio. 'It's that damn ghost plane, keeps crossing my path just as I am touching down,' he said.

"So I replied that we had agreed to go straight for it. 'Don't let us down at this stage,' I told him, 'A ghost can't hurt you. Try again and we will light up the runway for you.' I urged.

"Well, Foxy took the chance," Dryden went on. "We flashed a great searchlight down the length of the runway and in he came for his third attempt.

"Nearly all the squadron was watching as Foxy made his third attempt. And as he did so, just as he touched down, we saw that old Tiger Moth go straight across the front of him.

"But Foxy kept going right for him. Only he *didn't* go through him.

"There was the most awful crash and Foxy had died instantly . . . but don't ask any of us what he hit."





## THE MAN WHO WAS TWO

It was a cold spring day in 1937 and the wind whipped through the streets of Montreal. Mamie Jacobs shivered and clutched the fur coat closer to her throat. She sighed and glanced impatiently along the street. It was always the same when one wanted a cab in a hurry.

A tall man with dark hair walked by. He was unremarkable, except for the fact that he was wearing only a light suit and yet seemed impervious to the knifing wind. He stared ahead, his eyes fixed on the distance. Mamie smiled with sudden recognition. "Why, Mr. Rodgers, what a pleasant surprise! I didn't know you were in town!"

The man paused and glanced at her with a frown. Then he smiled slightly and the grim lines about his mouth softened. "Necessity, madam. If you'll excuse me . . ."

He bowed slightly and walked on. Before Mamie could speak again a cab pulled up and she hurried inside. She glanced out as the cab moved past Louis Rodgers. "I wonder what he's doing here, she thought. He's so strange, so mysterious . . ."

The last time she had met Louis Rodgers had been in an apartment in Toronto. There had been six ladies present, all members of the same bridge club. They were all of roughly middle years, mostly widows who had been left in reasonable comfort.

Rodgers had been recommended as a man with astonishing gifts, a medium who could communicate with those beyond the grave. Mamie and some of the others had thought of it as an amusing way to spend an evening. But that was before Rodgers began. He was grave, sombre and completely convincing. Far from being a joke, his references to the dead had made the evening disturbing, almost frightening. He had even spoken to Mamie's late husband, who, it seemed, was still following the stock market with close interest. At the end of the

evening it was agreed that Mr. Rodgers was well worth the fee he charged.

Some two weeks after Mamie's return to Toronto, the bridge club organised another meeting with the celebrated medium, Louis Rodgers. When Mamie arrived, the medium had not yet appeared, and she remembered the incident in Montreal.

"I must say I'm looking forward to this!" she smiled. "I was afraid he'd left town. You know, I saw him while I was in Montreal."

Mrs. Pasco, the organiser, looked puzzled. "When was that?"

Mamie shrugged. "Let's see—I remember—it must have been three weeks back from Wednesday—about four in the afternoon. He seemed in a hurry."

Mrs. Pasco shook her head and turned to the other woman who looked fascinated. "But that *can't* be! He was *here* that very afternoon. Isn't that right?" There was a murmur of agreement, but Mamie was sure, she remembered the time clearly. "It *was* him! He was in a hurry, but he spoke to me!"

Then Louis Rodgers appeared and a silence fell. He had the ability to make an occasion significant, to dominate without seeming to try. He was serious and polite, but his thoughts seemed to be elsewhere—not only on other matters, but in distant places beyond the reach of normal men.

At last, Mamie found the courage to ask her question. The other women watched, their eyes tense and absorbed. "Mr. Rodgers, I was telling my friends about seeing you in Montreal. But *they* say you were right here on Wednesday afternoon three weeks back. I did see you, didn't I?"

The silence grew and Rodgers sighed: "There are some questions that can have no answers. Let us say this—I am at the mercy of the spirits. Where they summon me, I must go . . ."

His manner made one thing clear—the subject was closed. But that did nothing to prevent the speculation evident in everyone's eyes. When Louis Rodgers left, Mamie turned in triumph. "Well, what do you say now? He admitted it—very nearly . . ."





"But, Mamie—we were telling the truth as well!" Mrs. Pasco said. "He was here! Montreal is over five hundred miles away. How could he be there and here at the same time? Unless . . ."

The story spread and was the first of many concerning Louis Rodgers and his mysterious ability to appear in separate places at the same time. The story appeared in the newspapers and the fame of Louis Rodgers was carried even further. While he had been doing very well he had suddenly become a pronounced success. Clients flooded to his door—the rich seeking diversion and the poor seeking hope and comfort. His reputation grew, and he became almost a household name. But not everyone was convinced or prepared to accept his new respectability.

For Dr. Martin Spencer the case was intriguing. As head of an institute for psychic research, he was interested in any evidence relating to the supernatural. At first, the case of Louis Rodgers had seemed to be the history of a highly successful publicity man. But as the weeks passed into months the reports grew in number and detail. The sources were varied—from the highly coloured account of a devotee to the harder eye of the natural sceptic. The common factor in all these reports was that Rodgers seemed to be a special case. He was either a man of extraordinary natural gifts or—as seemed more likely—a clever charlatan. There was an obvious way of finding out—and that was to have a proper investigation under scientifically controlled conditions.

In the late March of 1937, Doctor Spencer called at the luxury apartment of Louis Rodgers. On greeting him, Rodgers seemed relaxed and not at all surprised to have drawn the attention of an acknowledged expert on psychic phenomena. He was almost amused as the doctor made his proposal.

"You have made a considerable impression on our community, Mr. Rodgers. I was wondering if you would allow me to carry out some tests?"

"You want to prove me a fake?" Louis Rodgers smiled. "You intend to use modern science to unmask me? You don't really think I would submit to such an insult?"

"Believe me," Dr. Spencer said. "I have no feelings

about your abilities. In fact, if you are genuine I'd be delighted. I only want to find the truth! If you have special gifts it could be of enormous interest to people all over the world."

"Doctor, I am a certain kind of man," Rodgers replied slowly. "I have qualities that modern science cannot appreciate. There are people in this city who come to me for help and comfort. If I allow you to call me a fake they will suffer. They will have no hope. You must go—please. I am tired . . ."

Despite the doctor's attempts, Rodgers would not be persuaded. Although disappointed, Spencer had no choice but to leave. As he turned away from the apartment a man leaned from a stationary car and spoke to him. "You're keeping strange company. I wouldn't have thought you were the type for communing with spooks!" It was Detective Frank Chambers.

"It's an interesting case," said the doctor. "If he was genuine it could be very useful to my work. Trouble is, he won't play ball."

"Don't get involved," advised the policeman. "He's a con man—I've put hundreds like him away. If you take him seriously, so will half the nut cases in the city."

"You don't take my point, Frank." The doctor said. "If I investigate him it can be established just how much of a fraud he is. Obviously, that's why he won't allow it. He knows he'll lose his clients. Pity—see you around!"

Lieutenant Chambers paused as the doctor walked away. He had spent twenty years protecting society from its worst excesses. One thing he really hated—and that was a hypocrite, a confidence man. They seemed to him a breed that preyed on the defenseless, that took easy pickings and then boasted about their cunning. Grimly, he rang the bell at the door of Rodgers' apartment. Rodgers opened the door and frowned curiously. The policeman brushed past him, entered and flashed his warrant card. "I guess you've seen a few of those in your time. I'm a cop—I want a few words . . ."

"You mean I can help you?" Louis Rodgers asked. "With a case, perhaps? You know I have certain powers."





"So have the police department," replied Chambers. "Any lip and I'll use 'em!"

No further words were exchanged, but the policeman was sure his message was understood. He left the apartment satisfied with his first warning. Within hours, Doctor Spencer was surprised to receive a call from Louis Rodgers—and even more surprised at the change in the medium's attitude. "I've been thinking about your proposition, doctor, I have nothing to hide. Perhaps you should be allowed to attempt to test my powers."

"You mean you'll agree to my conditions?" Doctor Spencer asked. "It will mean strict supervision, proper control."

"As I say, I have nothing to fear. Do as you wish . . ."

Rodgers agreed to stay in Toronto to allow the investigators proper surveillance. He accepted that he would be followed on all journeys from his apartment about the city, and that his movements would be noted. He agreed that his movement would be verified and that a check could be made should there be a report of an appearance. He was willing and co-operative in every detail.

Lieutenant Chambers was amused when he heard the news. It proved his point—people with something to hide invariably collapsed under pressure. Rodgers' agreement was as good as an admission of guilt. Three days after the tests started he decided to visit the research center. He was glad to find Doctor Spencer interviewing Rodgers. The doctor was welcoming, the medium was cold and aloof; his manner expressed contempt for the policeman. The doctor shook his head and looked at the detective. Just then the telephone rang. Doctor Spencer answered it and frowned. He switched the desk amplifier so that the conversation could be heard by anyone in the room, "Doctor Spencer, this is Petrie—Montreal branch. We've found a man checked into an hotel under the name of Louis Rodgers."

"Have you contacted him yet?" the doctor asked.

"Sure—I had the photograph and the description. He claims to be the guy and I'm convinced. Guess he slipped out of Toronto without your boys knowing."

Lieutenant Chambers stared hard at Rodgers who was

gazing out of the window as if the whole affair had nothing to do with him. Doctober Spencer protested: "It *can't* be Rodgers. He's right here with me at this very moment!"

"What?" The voice sounded astonished. "I could swear this guy was the one. He knew everything, stood up to interrogation!"

Rodgers rose from his seat and turned to face the doctor. He was relaxed and confident. "Strange, isn't it? But there are some things the human mind cannot comprehend—as I've tried to tell you!"

His eyes passed sardonically over Lieutenant Chambers. The policeman frowned, Rodger's air of triumph needled him.

"That's no kind of proof!" exclaimed Chambers. "It's an old trick! What's to stop you from having a friend in Montreal? You pass the word to him and he makes himself known. He's been briefed by you—he has all the answers. *That* isn't an alibi!"

"That's true." Doctor Spencer interrupted. "It doesn't constitute scientific proof. There are rational explanations—which is what we don't want."

Louis Rodgers hesitated. Then the medium spoke: "Very well, since you will not accept my gifts I must provide you with your kind of proof! I will demonstrate my powers so that even you will be forced to believe! On Saturday, I will force you to admit my talent! Then, perhaps, you will leave me alone . . ." He spoke with such conviction that the two men were impressed.

On Saturday, April 8, 1937, Louis Rodgers was locked in an office at the research center with Doctor Spencer and Lieutenant Chambers. The detective watched the medium closely as Rodgers said: "Doctor Spencer, think of any word that might be used as a password."

The doctor shrugged ond said the first word that came into his mind. "Lilac—I was admiring some bushes on the way here. Will that do?"

"Excellent," Rodgers nodded. "You agree that only we three know the word? Now we must wait. Please do not talk to me. I shall be otherwise engaged."

He sounded confident and composed. The minutes





ticked by until an hour had passed. Suddenly, the telephone rang and pulled the two observers to attention. It was Petrie, the Montreal investigator and he sounded excited . . .

"I've seen the person who claimed to be Rodgers. He's moving down St. Catherine Street! I'm on his tail. I'll ring back soon!" Rodgers stared into the distance, his manner remote. The detective shook his head. "We're not going to have all this again? I was hoping for something really special!"

"It isn't over yet, Frank," the doctor said quietly. "There's time enough . . ."

The time passed slowly. Outside the day was bright and warm. Inside the air was hot and heavy. Only the droning of the fan disturbed the stillness. Lieutenant Chambers shifted in his chair. The blue sky seemed to beckon. He could have been out there instead of watching this charade. Still, he shrugged, it might be worth it to see some of the bounce knocked out of Rodgers.

The telephone rang and the doctor switched on a monitoring tape recorder. Petrie spoke quickly, his voice tight with excitement. "Doctor, I have the man here. He'd like to speak to you! I'll put him on."

There was a short silence and the next voice was low, pleasant and unmistakable. "This is Louis Rodgers calling Doctor Spencer. The code word is Lilac. I repeat, the code word is *Lilac* . . ."

Lieutenant Chambers stiffened and glared at Rodgers. The medium shook his head and blinked, as if coming from a deep sleep.

"You taped the call, doctor? I hope this time it offers the kind of proof you want. Now, if you'll excuse me—these things exhaust me . . ."

Doctor Spencer stared at the winding tape. As a professional researcher he had seen hundreds of cases, exposed dozens of fakers. He had developed an added sense to detect charlatans. But this man was different, baffling, extraordinary. For the first time in many years, the doctor felt the unique thrill of discovery.

"I'd like to see you again," he told Rodgers. "If you'll allow more tests we could really find the truth. Perhaps

that truth would help the world. There's so much we don't know . . ."

"There are many things man is not meant to know." Rodgers said quietly. "You will not see me again. I have tried to convince you—to present some evidence. If you will not believe, then nothing can help you."

He strode from the room and Lieutenant Chambers followed quickly. He caught up with the medium as he turned into the street. "Very neat, Rodgers—impressive. It was a smooth operation," he said. "Tell me, how did you rig it? Come on, play ball . . . I won't tell anyone."

Louis Rodgers paused and stared for a long moment at the policeman. He seemed weary and even sad. "You *still* do not accept, do you? For creatures with your ignorance there is no way of communicating. You are more dead than the dead. I pity you . . ."

The medium sighed and turned away. Chambers watched him go, his eyes angry and thoughtful. He was a policeman, his life was built on proof, on evidence. For his own peace of mind he would have to find the truth about Louis Rodgers.

But he never did—for fate took a hand. Rodgers died in 1942, serving with the Canadian Army in Europe. With him died his secret—a secret which was a hoax of astounding ingenuity or a phenomenon beyond the grasp of human understanding.

## THE OGOPOGO MONSTER—FACT OR FABLE?

There didn't seem to be any reason to accept the stories about the Ogopogo monster of Lake Okanagan as anything other than an old Indian legend. Certainly the Indians, native to this part of Canada, believe in it, because for untold centuries, the tribes have accorded religious awe and respect to the incarnate god "N'ha-a-itk" who dwelt in the waters of the lake and who took the form of a giant serpent. It was rarely seen, but so much did they accept the existence of their god, that none of them would have dared cross the lake in their frail





canoes without first sacrificing a live animal and throwing it overboard to appease their god's anger.

And, every once in a while, the folk tales have it, N'ha-a-itk would claim a man. The slight canoes could offer no defense to the monumental power of the reptile's strength; and no human arm could hope to paddle fast enough to out-distance a creature which has recently been computed to swim at something like twenty miles an hour.

Until recently, however, there was little reason to suppose it was anything other than a figment of some ancient medicine man's imagination. But now, the present day inhabitants of British Columbia are beginning to wonder if there *could* be such a creature living beneath the waters of the lake. A prehistoric, unknown species—whose kind were thought to have disappeared from the face of the Earth many millions of years ago? For in the past few years, quite a few very reliable witnesses have claimed to have seen the Ogopogo Monster.

When the first white settlers moved into the region there were remarkably few sceptics and the demon of the lake was accepted as a fact. Very likely this would have been because the Scottish were well represented in the pioneering of the Canadian hinterland. And the Scottish have a lake which is just as famous, for the same reason, as the ninety mile long Lake Okanagan. It is not surprising, therefore, that they found no difficulty in accepting the existence of a creature that all conventional knowledge dictated could never now exist.

Not far from the town of Pentiction, 25 miles by the map, is a small island called Squally Point and this island is the reputed home of the monster.

It must be said straightaway that the Canadian monster is not the product of a tourist conscious Chamber of Commerce. Like its more famous and probable kin in Loch Ness, it is well and truly founded in ancient legend. The most compelling proof of this is Indian rock paintings.

One is a "pictograph" painted in red on the rocks close to the lake, which was done many generations before the white settlers moved in. It was done long before there was need to coin a story to frighten off the en-

croaching white men, and naturally long before anyone had ever thought of such a thing as a tourist industry.

The picture, a simple drawing with little detail, shows a horse-headed creature, with three bars or points where a horses' mane would be. The head surmounts either a long neck or a serpentine body and the whole thing is reminiscent of that harmless little creature, the sea horse. But, it bears a strange and uncanny likeness to the Sea Serpent, that fabulous monster said to inhabit the Seven Seas and to have been represented on explorers' charts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

It casts an interesting sidelight, too, on the Loch Ness monster in Scotland. Up until the last two hundred years, no map of Scotland that showed Loch Ness was complete without a picture of a fearsome creature, looking remarkably similar to N'ha-a-itk, complete with horse-like head surmounting a sinuous, snakelike neck and sprouting horns at the top. It usually bore the legend "here be Water Bulls" or some such warning. Water Bulls is the literal English translation of the Gaelic name for that monster.

There is good reason to suppose that the early Pictish tribes who lived around the shores of Loch Ness regarded that monster in much the same way as the Indians of British Columbia. Legend speaks of Saint Columbia commanding the devil of Loch Ness to leave a swimming Christian unharmed. Etymologists belive that the name of the Scottish Loch may be derived from an ancient British water goddess, called Nesa.

Many expeditions have been mounted in Scotland to try to prove or disprove the huge creature's existence. What evidence has been claimed has been tantalisingly vague. The controversy goes on. N'ha-a-itk has been less well served. Apart from gaining the more memorable and pronouncable name of Ogopogo nothing else has been done. Few have seen fit to enquire closely into the legend.

That the legend may well have a basis in fact is evidenced by some of the depositions made within the last two decades. One in 1960 was by the German vice-consul to Vancouver. Herr Hans Gerade who, with a companion, was startled to see "a spoil of waves with





foam in the middle; it looked like the wash of a boat moving swiftly." There was no boat to be seen close enough for its wash to be confused with torpedo-like disturbance.

Wakes alone do not make a monster, but other residents and holiday-makers have more tangible and impressive reports. A newspaper publisher, with four others, was cruising down Lake Okanagan in July, 1959, a year before the German vice-consul reported his sighting. The publisher, Dick Miller, glanced idly aft and noticed "what appeared to be the serpent." His opinions were soon verified.

Through his field glasses he was able to pick out a snake-like head, which the party later estimated to be at least ten feet long by nine feet wide! The creature remained nearly two hundred feet away and apparently disapproved of closer acquaintance. As Miller's party turned their boat around, Ogopogo began to submerge. The five humps which were visible to all of them disappeared, and as the boat closed in on the huge animal, it lowered its head and sank from sight.

This group was privileged to have had one of the closest sights of the fabled reptile for many years. At one point they were a mere sixty yards from it, close enough to pick out the smallest detail through field glasses. Had it been a mass of rotting vegetation, swept to the surface and made buoyant by marsh gas, it would have been recognised as such through the field glasses. And even allowing for discrepancies because of excitement, it is difficult to accept that all five would have been affected in the same way.

By common agreement, for example, the color was said to be a dark greenish tone. The length was, and is, anybody's guess. Estimates vary from about 45 to 60 feet long all the way up to over 200 feet. Dick Miller's monster must have been one of the larger ones. Presumably there must be more than one and the different estimates of length must refer to different individuals. The young would be much shorter than the adults.

Over the years, the creatures, collectively known as Ogopogo, appear to have suffered a change of heart, at least in eating habits. Fortunately for the present day

inhabitants of the Okanagan, the species no longer seem to relish the taste of warm blooded creatures. The Indians have many stories relating the sudden and dramatic mode of attack used by their "Water Demon." Shark-like, it appears to approach from beneath, for nothing shows above the surface. Instead, the luckless horse or man is dragged down with scarcely a ripple—other than that produced by the victim.

Within the last sixty years, a farmer, John McDougal, whose Scottish ancestors could probably have told him a thing or two about lake monsters, lost two horses as he was swimming them across the lake. It was his habit to drop a chicken or a pig into the water as he neared the middle of the lake. On one occasion, he forgot his offering and neglected to go back to fetch one. Instead he hitched his horses behind his canoe and paddled across. As he neared the fateful Squally Island, some powerful force seized both of his harnessed horses. Paddle as he would, he could not pull them to the surface. The force increased. The rope tightened implacably, until his canoe's stern dipped, and he also was being dragged under. There was nothing to do, but to cut the rope and abandon his team. And not a shred of his horses was ever seen again.

It might almost be said of Lake Okanagan, as it is of Loch Ness, that "it never gives up its dead." Maybe there really is some reason other than deep setting currents, for it is a sinister fact that no drowning victim in the Scottish lake will be seen again if he is not pulled out of the water straight away.

Like the Loch Ness Monster, Ogopogo is seldom seen and rarely does much of it show above the water. Many people have reported seeing a lump in the water like an upturned boat, which had suddenly shot away at a fantastic speed when approached by the curious.

Miller estimated it as being between 15 and 17 miles an hour, while others have reported even greater speeds. A few viewers have seen what they thought was a floating log or upturned boat suddenly elevate a neck and display what has been variously described as a goat or sheep-like head.

Objections to the chance of these huge relics of an Age





of Reptiles being able to survive in a fresh water lake, can be answered by reference to the nearly proved existence of the Loch Ness Monster. The most that cautious scientists will admit at the moment is that a creature, or creatures, of unusual size and type do live in the Scottish waterway, but no opinion as to its characteristics or appearance can be arrived at until further evidence is presented.

Evidence of eye witnesses is, of course, insufficient. And photographic evidence has never yet caught more than the head of the creature or its back—again insufficient.

It is accepted then that some unusual creature does inhabit Loch Ness and that lake is smaller, shallower and much narrower, than the far distant Lake Okanagan. Loch Ness, while being nearly twice as deep as the North Sea, is still less than 800 feet deep at the deepest point. Ogopogo's watery home on the other hand is twice that again at least!

The center of the lake is anywhere between 1,500 and 2,000 feet deep. It is well served with rivers and amply stocked with fish which is more than can be said for Loch Ness. Ogopogo's relatives are less fortunate.

Relatives *is* the word, for there must be more than one in both lakes to account for the length of time their existence has been suspected. The Loch Ness reptile is thought to subsist on a limitless diet of eels, helped out with the occasional salmon.

On the face of it there seems more reason to accept a giant saurian in Lake Okanagan than in the Lake of Ness, and the latter is, at least, on the point of acceptance by wary, but fascinated zoologists.

## GHOST AT THE "HANGMAN'S ARMS"

Ann Barnard had a lot to worry her as she drove along the M.4 motorway from London to the West Country. In the first place, she was miles from anywhere. She hadn't passed a house or a garage for several hours, and

from the curious noises and mysterious rattles that were coming from the engine, she felt sure that her rather ancient car couldn't go on for many more miles.

At times like these, she normally liked a cigarette to soothe her nerves—but that was the other reason why she was worried. She had no cigarettes. And at four thirty on a December morning in 1966, there was just nowhere she could stop and buy some. For London was many hours behind her and Bristol was a long way ahead.

Once or twice she stopped on the shoulder of the road and checked her map. That was no help. There were lots of villages and petrol stations marked, but no place where she could expect service at that late hour.

So she had every reason to feel surprised when she saw the lights of an old inn around a bend in the road. However, it wasn't *that* which made her almost crash into the barrier . . . it was what she saw hanging from a gnarled, old oak tree opposite the inn. For there, swaying gently in the headlight's glare, was the body of a man. At first, she was so frightened that she could hardly start the car again . . . and then cold reason returned. It was probably just a hoax, she decided—or some publicity stunt for the inn. A very macabre one, nevertheless.

So starting the car again, she drove slowly into the parking area in front of the inn. As she got out, she glanced at the hanging corpse again. It was so life like—she could even hear the rope *creaking* as it swayed to and fro in the wind—that she shuddered. Then she hurried across the car park towards the friendly glow from the inn. Through the glass doorway, she could see the landlord and his wife tidying the place up, so she knocked softly.

As the landlord opened the door and motioned her inside with a friendly smile Ann mentioned her problems. However, while he couldn't do anything about her car, he did sell her some cigarettes. At the same time, Ann was invited to stay for a while and have some coffee.

Everything was perfectly normal, until Ann asked the question that had been on her mind since she arrived there. She had half-expected her temporary hosts to make some joking reference to such an unusual exhibit.





But when they didn't, she asked: "What's that body doing hanging from the oak tree? Is it some sort of publicity stunt or something . . . ?"

The effect was electrifying! The landlord dropped his coffee cup and the crash reverberated like a bomb in the silence that had fallen in the room. His wife, however, started to sob.

The landlord, Bill Owen, looked at Ann for a moment, as if reluctant to speak. Then he said slowly: "People are always asking us about that—but we've never seen anybody hanging there."

Ann stared at him—started to speak—and instead turned and stared through the window across at the oak tree. For a second or so all she could see was the tree's grim silhouette. Then a lorry trundled past slowly, its headlights picking the tree out clearly and she saw that branch again. But she didn't see anybody hanging from it!

"They told us when we took over this place, that it was a famous place for ghosts—that it was a jinxed house," said Owen gloomily, when he saw Ann's startled expression. "We didn't believe in ghosts and we certainly haven't *seen* anything, but there are always *noises*. The cash register rings in the night, and when I come down, there's no one there.

"The clothes are pulled off the children's beds. It's really got my wife down."

"We must get out," said the weeping woman. "That's two people today who've asked about the body. It just goes on and on . . .

"The local padre pooh-poohed the idea of ghosts, but he only stayed a day. He was sitting in that chair over there, all by himself. There weren't any other customers and quite suddenly we *all* saw that other chair in the corner shuffle over the floor and come to rest beside him, as if someone had drawn a chair up for a chat with him. He was scared out of his wits.

"We even asked him to exorcise whatever it was that was haunting the place," added Mrs. Owen tearfully. "He sprinkled holy water, and said prayers, but things still happen. It's the tree that gets me down.

"So many people coming in and telling us about it—

in a matter-of-fact way—we almost dread that door opening with a new customer coming in."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Anne. "I had no idea I was going to stir up something."

She turned to go, and said: "Well, I hope things go better for you."

Outside, she looked up at the sign creaking gently above. "The Hangman's Arms." She looked across at the tree. No sign of anything strange. She climbed into her car with some trepidation, and pulled the starter. The car might not start at all now, after all the funny noises it had been making. But the engine roared into life and the car sped away, almost as if it were glad to get out of that atmosphere. She had been driving for about an hour, before she realised something—she had forgotten to bring along the cigarettes.

A few months later, Ann told me this story and added: "Nothing *but* a jinx could have made me forget them . . . no wonder the business is doing so badly. I mean, any other inn on such a busy road would have been making the licencee's fortune."

However, I didn't quite believe her story. It smacked too much of a hoax, until a few months later when I was driving along the M.4 myself, to visit the people Ann had been going to see. I drove towards the inn, as she had done.

My first sight of it was around the sharp bend on the motorway and I saw the oak tree, gnarled and aged, just as she had, but there was no body hanging from it. Neither were there any lights showing in the inn. Instead, I saw a "For Sale" sign sticking to the gate. On my way back to London the following Monday I saw dozens of cars driving into the inn car park, and curiously I followed them. The business was being auctioned.

Afterwards, I spoke to Bill Owen who had been introduced to me by somebody else there. I mentioned Ann to him and he remembered her. Obviously he knew she had told me the story about the haunted hanging.

"Who ever's bought this place will end up almost bankrupt as I did," he said moodily. "Unless they chop down that damned oak tree . . ."

It was a year later when I was driving to Bristol again





for the weekend and I passed the "Hangman's Arms." The car park was full and there was obviously a roaring trade going on. Then I glanced at the spot where the oak tree had stood, but there was no longer anything there. Except a short stump.

## THE EVIL FORCES THAT DEFY EXPLANATION

It seemed as though the whole world was smiling, that bright spring morning almost eighty years ago, as the Royal Navy frigate HMS *Eurydice* sailed towards Portsmouth Harbour. It was a Sunday, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, and the crew of over 350 men and boys were on the last short lap of a four-month round trip to Bermuda. Soon they would be back home; soon they would be with their families again. And there was an almost festive mood in the air.

Certainly there was nothing to indicate to anybody that the *Eurydice* was a doomed vessel, that she was destined very shortly to be shattered by the elemental forces that still defy explanation.

There was no hint of this when *Eurydice* was last seen sailing serenely towards Spithead where she was due at nightfall. True, the run between Ventnor and Shanklin, could be tricky, requiring expert navigation. But in such mill-pond conditions who was worrying? Certainly not the young crew of the training ship. Yet even today there are people who remember hearing their parent's account of a sudden strange foreboding by those on shore—a feeling that something wasn't quite right on that spring day.

It all started at Clifton, where carriages on Brunel's famous suspension bridge were halted by an inexplicable giant cloud which threw a gigantic cigar-shaped shadow over the earth. It appeared to be a cloud—but was totally unlike any *normal* cloud. Black and menacing, it moved like a torpedo across the sky at a speed later estimated to be over thirty miles per hour. The "cigar" was thought to be some twenty-five miles long and

half a mile across. It had approached from the northwest.

It reached Malvern by lunchtime and, as it darkened the hills, people left their homes to watch it—and to sigh with relief when it had gone. By half past three that afternoon *Eurydice* had reached Dunnose Head on the Isle of Wight. So had that menacing cloud.

Inexplicable and menacing though it was, the phenomenon had at least proved harmless. But soon the unease was turning to cold fear. And cold fear, moreover, felt on one of the loveliest days of the year. Around the cloud, which was like a gigantic ink blot on a cloth of gold, the sun seemed to grow brighter and the day to get warmer. The cloud itself, on the other hand, deepened into a jet black.

Trouble began with a throaty rumble that ripened into a roar. It was immediately accompanied by a sudden windstorm that whipped itself speedily into the fury of a tornado, causing people to clutch at one another for support. Then, as if the entire universe were in the grip of some meteorological curse, the heavens opened with a snowstorm of such viciousness that its fall caused temporary blindness.

And *Eurydice*? When observers had recovered sufficiently to look out to sea, they saw that the ship had disappeared completely.

When the eruption had calmed sufficiently, the Captain of *Emma*, a coal schooner in the area, altered course towards a distant blob on the water. It proved to be a slapping sail to which was clinging a survivor in a cork jacket. A boat was lowered, and within an hour, four of *Eurydice*'s crew had been picked up, one of whom had been drowned.

The *Emma* circled the area for hours. There were no more survivors—but there was one pitifully dramatic sight. As if in its death rattle, *Eurydice* managed to inch a little above the water and display forlornly her three masts. Then she sunk back, spewing to the surface a long line of debris and corpses.

One of the survivors, Able Seaman Cuddiford, gave an account of what had happened on board.

At half-past three, the frigate had rounded Dunnose





Head, moving at a regular eight knots. Suddenly, the sea had begun to chop violently, throwing *Eurydice* up and down with the contempt of a school bully for a smaller boy. This had been the curtain-raiser to the appearance of the cloud itself—and a burst of wind soon to reach tornado force.

An order was swiftly given to control the Royals—the topmost sails. But any member of the crew unlucky enough even to get into the rigging was either catapulted into the sea or hurled down on the deck. The sea cascaded over the decks and through the open ports, drowning those below decks instantly. Those above would have survived for longer if it hadn't been for the wind. As if impatient to smash *Eurydice* to a pulp, it crashed into the vessel, throwing her on to her side. This took care of most of the crew, wherever they happened to be.

Cuddiford stated: "I saw men strangled like felons on gallows by the rigging." All the time the snow carpeted down, covering the few survivors in the water.

Rear Admiral Foley, in charge of Portsmouth Dockyard, was put in charge of the subsequent investigations. There was little to investigate. The shell of *Eurydice* was salvaged. So that she could be towed to harbour, salvage experts worked to cut away spars, sails and rigging. But this was poor evidence to explain the inexplicable storm. Aboard HMS *Duke of Wellington* in Portsmouth Harbour, the enquiry opened.

The verdict was the expected one: "Her Majesty's ship *Eurydice* foundered on the afternoon of Sunday, March 24, 1878, by pressure of wind upon her sail during a sudden and exceptionally dense snow storm which overtook her when its approach was partially hidden by the proximity of the ship to high land."

Salvage operations proved difficult because of the deep mud in which *Eurydice* lay, but Admiral Foley ordered that, in spite of the difficulties, she was to be brought into the harbor.

Some three months after the tragedy, the vessel was towed by the tug *Grinder* into Portsmouth Harbour. As befitted a death ship, she was swathed in black crepe.

Crowds stood in solemn silence, broken only by the sobs of relatives of the dead.

Sailors are among the world's most superstitious people. A stricken ship, it is reasoned, brings bad luck. *Eurydice* was cursed and must be utterly destroyed. The moment the crowds were dispersed, an order was given for the workmen to tear the vessel to pieces, to remove everything that would remind anyone of her existence. Even her copper was melted.

What caused the death of *Eurydice*? For nearly a century, meteorologists have puzzled over such evidence as exists, but none of them have been able to produce any more convincing theory than that of an "atmospheric freak."

There were whispers of a secret weapon launched by the increasingly belligerent Imperial Germany, but primitive airships, even if they had existed in the 1870s, couldn't have been 25 miles long and capable of producing snowstorms.

The superstitious believed that *Eurydice* was cursed, but no one could say how. She had a perfectly honorable —if unremarkable—career as a frigate and her role as a training ship could scarcely have been surpassed.

So what *was* the cloud? We shall probably never know, for the watery graveyard of Dunnose Head yields no secrets to explain this strangely Biblical curse which darkened the Earth and filled men's hearts with fear.

## THE RIDDLE OF THE "FOO FIGHTERS"

The Second World War was filled with inexplicable incidents, from the mysterious disappearance of the famous bandleader Glenn Miller, to the reasons why the German army in Rumania was never used. But to connoisseurs of the bizzare there will always be one enigma that outshines all the others.

These incidents, or to be more precise, *series* of incidents, are concerned not with the problems of the war, but rather of something that is certainly not of *this*





world. The weird, cigar-shaped flying objects that were seen on many occasions by pilots of both sides. At the height of the war, United States Intelligence thought that they were experimental aircraft which were being tested by the Germans and nicknamed them "Foo Fighters."

This theory was good enough for the authorities—at least until the end of the war. Unfortunately for the official theory, it was discovered that the Germans had been just as puzzled by the appearance of these objects. If the Luftwaffe pilots gave them a name it was not mentioned in the official reports to the Berlin headquarters of the Air Army. Ironically, the official German investigation decided on the same explanation as the Allies had in their turn.

"They were undoubtedly," decided the Oberstkommandant responsible for the investigation, "experimental Allied aircraft undergoing trials over Europe." There the matter rested. Nothing like the Foo Fighters was seen after the war and the subject was conveniently dropped.

There were explanations at the time, but they were propagated merely for the benefit of those foolish combat veterans who "thought" they had seen strange things in the sky. All of them, it seemed, were suffering from "illusions" or battle fatigue. Once the idea was about, everybody began seeing them because they *expected* to see them; thus they were figments of overwrought imagination.

Nobody seemed to query at the time that any combat veteran who began to "see" things was a liability to his crew-mates. Any such mental instability would be apparent in many ways and every unit medical officer would soon have reasons to ground the sufferer. That they did not automatically ground any aircrew who saw the mysterious Foo Fighters is surely a measure of the stability of each witness.

The main reason for the disappearance of the Foo Fighters from public conscience was the pervasive and persuasive explanation that the majority of witnesses had been victims of mass hysteria; that is, they all saw what they had been expecting to see.

The official origin of the Foo Fighter idea had been

the dimly seen silhouette of one of the new German jets. These clumsy planes had no tail and seen broadside or in a setting sun, or through tired eyes, they would give the impression of the stubby, cigar-shaped Foo Fighters. This explanation did not take into account the phenomenal speeds attributed to these objects, but —again—a good answer was found in "mass hysteria" and alleged tiredness. They hadn't really moved fast, went the version according to the psychiatrists, they merely seemed to.

This explanation, therefore, makes all the more interesting the discovery of a "secret" file in the archives of the British Royal Air Force. For this file gave the results of an official British investigation which antedated the wave of "sightings" that occurred later in the war. Briefly, the report was from a British Intelligence officer to a high ranking member of the War Cabinet on the strange craft which had followed a lone bomber across Europe, and then streaked skywards when the plane touched down in North Africa.

It is important to understand that at that time, late 1943, no one had heard of Foo Fighters. The name is American, as are most of the sightings, so the Intelligence officer, whom we shall call Harcourt, was ready to believe the bomber crew's statements and ready to accept the existence of a strange craft. Harcourt, however, was merely trying to verify whether the black craft was or was not a German prototype plane. His report then is doubly valuable, because he had no preconceived notions.

If anything he must have approached his investigation hoping that the strange flying machine was not German. If it was, then it meant that beseiged Britain had to face a new airborne menace capable of flying at fantastic speeds and Continent-wide distances, which outclassed every fighter that the British could hope to match against it. If this craft was German then the British would face certain defeat and an invasion—the first since the middle of the eleventh century.

It was against this ominous background that Wing Commander Harcourt stepped out of his staff car in the





autumn of 1943 to interview the entire crew of a Lancaster Bomber.

Harcourt exchanged a few words with the Station Intelligence officer, who was in charge of briefing and debriefing bomber crews, and who was also directly responsible for transmitting the rumours to Central Intelligence. Harcourt learned that the crew of *Bouncing Bessie* had had a hard time in the three weeks since they had returned to England and reported the sighting. They had been mercilessly mocked by their comrades and wanted only to forget their experience. In fact, the chief pilot, Flight Lieutenant Waverley, had made it known that neither he nor his crew would be very upset if no one took any further notice of their unfortunate report.

Unfortunately for their wounded feelings, Central Intelligence read the document and their reported object seemed to threaten national security; therefore, it must be investigated fully. The fate of the civilization of Western Europe might hang on their evidence.

Harcourt's interrogation took them back to the September evening when *Bouncing Bessie* took off from the airbase in Southern England. She was one of a wing of three squadrons charged with the bombing of the industrial complex of Turin, in Italy.

The bombers formed into waves, while still over blacked-out England with *Bessie* taking the extreme edge of her particular formation. Within half an hour the formation was crossing the Dutch coast, running the gauntlet of German anti-aircraft fire that protected the coast.

A few Lancasters went down at this stage of the journey and even more fell victim to the prowling German fighters. As the bomber wing battled across northern Europe, the opposition increased in fury. Squadrons of fighters swooped down on them, innocent now of their own short-winded, fighter cover. Only bombers could carry enough fuel to see them through the journey from England to the airbase in North Africa. Not even bombers at that date could carry enough spirit to take them to a southern European target and back to England. A fact which alarmed Wing Commander Harcourt when

he heard of the report put in by the crew of *B-Bessie*. The aircraft they saw was obviously quite capable of making such a journey many times over.

During one of the ferocious air battles which was ripping the dawn sky over southern France, Flight Lieutenant Waverley's plane was separated from its formation. One moment the massed Lancasters were pounding doggedly onwards, the next their front was wide open. Enemy fighters swept through the gap, the plane on Waverley's right staggered under the impact of massed cannon shells. He noticed smoke pouring from its port wing and immediately put his joy-stick over. If the plane exploded, its bombs could easily destroy *B-Bessie* as well.

Waverley was still turning away when his compatriots' plane blew up. He and his crew were stunned; only instinct enabled them to keep the Lancaster on an even keel. A few minutes later, his plane was quite alone in the sky.

The battle had moved on and somehow he had not heard the squadron's instructions to change course to avoid the enemy fighter concentration. *B-Bessie* was only slightly damaged and well able to continue and complete the mission.

Without consulting the crew, Waverley turned the plane towards Turin and its armament factories. He knew, as did his men, that if only one bomber reached the target the entire raid would have been worth it. It was while he was weighing the pros and cons of their staying in the air long enough to do some damage to the enemy, that one of the gun crew drew attention to an aircraft that was coming up fast from the rear.

It could only have been a German fighter at that time and in that place. As there was only one, Waverley thought there was still a chance for them to win. Guns were aimed and fingers tensed. The aircraft came on, seemingly intent on catching them up. Suddenly—unbelievably—it trebled its speed and flashed past them. There wasn't a hope of any of the gunners getting off a shot before it stopped abruptly a mile or so in front of them and turned. The Lancaster's crew waited . . .





they knew that their plane was helpless against such an attacker.

The strange craft turned and almost coasted back towards them. Just as it was coming within range, it turned slightly and continued on a circular course which took it around the lumbering bomber. It was now travelling only slightly faster than the British plane and the crew had the time to see it clearly.

It was cigar-shaped, jet black, about ten feet long, and amazingly, displayed no tailplane at all; neither was there a cockpit. There were no international markings and no visible means of propulsion. Had they known of such a thing as a jet airplane, they *still* would have been amazed. The rear was indistinguishable from the front, and it was apprently solid, as one witness said: "Rather like a submarine without a propeller or conning tower."

Still maintaining a discreet distance, the black stranger banked around and flew along the other side. The rear gunner clearly saw that it had no wings of any sort. To the aircrew of *B-Bessie* it seemed quite obvious that their uncanny neighbor had no right to remain airborne. It looked, in fact, impossible to even get off the ground.

Seeing nothing else to do, Waverley pressed on. Surprisingly the other plane followed and stayed with them all the way to the Alps.

By then *Bessie* was flying in daylight and the crew was making preparations for the attack. They still considered the Foo Fighter to be an enemy plane and wondered why it had held off from attacking. Waverley said later that, in all its actions, it seemed to know everything worth knowing about the Lancaster.

For one thing, it stayed just out of range of their guns. It knew its safety margin to within a few feet. Another, and rather sinister point, was that it knew the Lancaster's rate of climb. The loaded bomber began to climb when it reached the first slopes of the Alps and the "copy-cat" as they nicknamed it, climbed with them. It stayed level with their wing-tip as they clawed through the air, and never once anticipated them. Seconds after they altered course for another manoeuvre it would follow suit, even when their object was obvious. That it knew the capabilities of a Lancaster surprised

none of them. Every German fighter pilot would know the same. It would be part of their training.

The unwanted escort left them as they strugggled through a high pass in the Alps. Their heavy plane could not be risked over the peaks of the mountains and Waverley decided to storm through the pass, hoping that the enemy would be taken by surprise. In this he was correct.

As the Lancaster droned past the Alps, a call from the top gunner warned Waverley that their escort was back. Through his perspex dome, the gunner could see the stubby little cylinder following their every move overhead, and he fired a futile burst of machine-gun bullets.

"The "copy-cat's" pilot appeared to realise his craft had been seen and commenced an incredible manoeuvre. As *B-Bessie* plodded on, the other started to descend towards her. It did not dive nose first, as might have been expected, but sank down keel first, as a helicopter might when landing.

Once more the strange craft repeated its rigmarole of circling the plane. It stayed with them all the way to Turin and left them as they commenced their run-in before bombing. It streaked skywards at an unbelievable speed, a few minutes before the Italian ground defenses got off their first few rounds.

Waverley's aircraft completed its mission, bombing the target successfully and heading for North Africa without severe damage. The crew was hardly surprised when their old friend dropped back from the upper air and accompanied them till they were a few miles from landing. All this time, it did virtually nothing except stay on an even keel with them. Every so often it would nose up and over them always keeping just out of the range of their guns and apparently inspecting them from the other side.

The aircrew joked uneasily among themselves, saying that one side must have looked better than the other and it couldn't decide which. In fact, *B-Bessie* looked like a flying coffin. Her sides and wings had been ripped by gunfire which had not really damaged the plane at all.

The last they saw of the "copy cat" was when they were in sight of the African mainland. It turned sky-





wards then and streaked away, dwindling to a dot within seconds.

Waverley lost no time in reporting his experience, thinking that news of such a revolutionary plane would be vital to British Intelligence. No one took him seriously then, but once he was back in England it was worse. His fellow pilots teased him and the crew unmercifully. It was this which brought the matter to the knowledge of his unit Intelligence officer, who in his turn was responsible for Wing Commander Harcourt's visit.

Harcourt's summary of the facts showed that he believed the strange craft to have been no figment of their imagination; he was also convinced that the Third Reich was not capable of producing such an aircraft. To put it briefly, his main point was that had the Germans developed such a plane, the Second World War would have been over within months!

The file was passed around interested and responsible people, and finally tucked away. The war ended and all the documents were passed to the Air Historical Branch of the Royal Air Force where it landed in a cabinet gathering dust.

It would have remained there—perhaps for ever—if a statistician had not unearthed it while working on a historical project. He removed the file for interest's sake and rediscovered it at his home a few years after he had left the A.H.B. office.

There is really no fitting end to this story. There is no likely end for generations to come; until all the reports of unidentified flying objects are proved to be either illusions—or reality. It is worth noting that the Foo Fighter which intrigued the pilots who flew later in the war, already seemed to know all about the war planes of the 1940s some months before they appeared in force. The black, cigar-shaped craft that followed Flight Lieutenant Waverley's plane already knew just what his plane was capable of doing.

For how long had the "copy cat's" makers been studying the war planes of Europe. Many questions that occur must remain unanswered. For example, what was the purpose of following a war plane? From the welter of thoughts raised by this near-fantastic story there is one

comforting one. Assuming that the "copy cat" did come from another planet, was it perhaps interested in the course of the war?

## VOYAGE THROUGH LIMBO—FOR THE DEVIL'S OWN

Under the stars of the Southern Cross, patches of sky moved lazily among cloud-wisps lit by an incandescent moon. And Charley Moon, the part-aboriginal fisherman, padded in his bare feet over the crunching coral down to the tiny island's beach. He ran a hand along the bulwark of the boat there—his boat, old, open, with a gouty, complaining petrol engine. Not much, but his. How many other aborigines had their own motor boat for the crayfishing, eh? Maybe the odd one down towards Perth, but none here—not on the Alhobros Islands.

In fact, Charley knew only too well that even if all the "abos" and quite a few white men had the best equipped boats in the world, they wouldn't come near Alhobros Island. Charley knew that it was believed to have been haunted by a spectre that was reputed to be as terrifying as the *Flying Dutchman*. That was why every other fisherman avoided the place. They didn't want to see the "death ship."

But Charley didn't believe in anything like that. There was good money to be had on the Alhobros. The crayfishing there was practically virgin territory . . . and he was going to rape it himself.

Charley kicked speculatively at a large rounded stone and headed for the driftwood hut, two paces further, that was his temporary fishing base. Suddenly he halted abruptly. Large stones lightly kicked don't roll and bounce. This one did. He turned back. It was a human skull. Horrified, but fascinated, he forced himself to pick up the object. It was brittle, light and old. White man, decided Charley aloud, and looked over the shallows to the reef beyond.

That wicked line of coral showed in the calm night only as a thin filigree of foam. But as Charley clutched





the skull and watched, he became aware of movement past it, out to sea. A sudden shriek of wind sounded past him, howled menacingly through the scrub—yet the stunted bushes remained motionless. Then, plainly in the moonlight, he saw it—a large sailing ship, square-rigged in a way totally alien to him, driving hard for the reef.

The unfelt wind screamed across the island, bearing with it the roar of great waves breaking on the coral. And in that calm sea, on that windless night, the sailing vessel pitched and rolled on an invisible swell. And came on, and on.

Paralysed, mouth agape, Charley Moon stared. Deliberately, almost in slow motion, the strange ship struck the reef; faintly, he heard distant cries that he did not understand. Then the skull dropped from his hands to splinter on the coral rock of Beacon Island. When the fisherman looked up again, the ship had vanished.

It was June the fourth, but Charley had no head for dates. White man's history was a closed book to him. He could not, in his terror, know that he had witnessed an event that for its misery, its treachery and its vileness can have no parallel in the history of the seas.

"To the High and Mighty Seventeen.

"May it please my Lord Masters, my Directors, on this sorrowful Day hath arrived here the Company's servant Fleet President Francisco Pelsaert, Commander of the Ship Batavia. He having been wrecked upon a Shoal on the coast of the Great South Land, and the ship destroyed utterly, he hath in a small Sloop journeyed here with 46 Others, they being Discovered five days out from this city and port of Batavia by the merchantman Frederick Hendrick.

"Of the people of the ship, a goodly number (may the Almighty preserve them!) are left in that place where the Wreck befell, with such Goods of the Company as may have been salved. It is further grievous to Report that the mentioned ship struck the Shoal not through misfortune of weather but by the act of Ariaen Jacobsz, Captain and master of the ship Batavia, through allow-

ing himself to be Blown out of his Course by gross Neglect.

"Wherefore I have thought fit (as Your Honours may agree) to dispatch the Company's yacht Sardam for the Relief of the people marooned, ordering Commander Pelsaert to arrive most speedily at that place for their Comfort and safety, in which may the Almighty keep them.

"Your obdt servant,
"Jan Pieterszoon Coen, Governor-General for
the Dutch East India Company
"This done at Batavia Castle and
sent aboard Your Honour's
merchantman Dordrecht this
seventh Day of June, the year of
Our Lord 1629."

That was the letter, and what follows was the deed that shocked the world . . . and condemned a group of desperate men to spend all eternity in limbo.

Understeerman Gillies Fransz stands four-square in front of the great wheel, feeling the tug of its spokes as the seas surge past the *Batavia*'s enormous rudder, and staring at the huge white sails that belly out above his head in the moonlight.

For'ard he hears Captain Jacobsz—was it true what they whispered of him, that he and the high bo'sun planned to seize the ship and turn pirate?—roar savagely at the bow lookout. "Ahead there, fool! What's that?"

Faintly above the rigging's creak and the sails' clatter comes the reply: "Moon on the water, skipper, that's all."

Then the wheel is wrenched from Fransz's hands, a crash, and another and the deck shakes; halyards snap and blocks swing free, there are shouts and screams and above all comes the thunder of surf on the reef.

Daylight brought panic among the passengers, while sailors worked desperately to lighten ship. Overboard went the cannon; the mainmast went too, lest its weight, and that of the sails and rigging, should turn the *Batavia* over on her beam ends. It was to no avail. Grinding and shuddering, lifted by the ocean swells and dropped





again upon the razor-sharp coral, the pride of the fleet began to tear herself apart.

The two small islands that lay in the shallow water beyond, began to look decidedly inviting to the people aboard. Grasping a few pitiful belongings, they headed for land in the ship's boats with Commander Pelsaert and Captain Jacobsz.

On board the wreck late into the night, soldiers and sailors ran amok, while in the commander's cabin a group of dedicated men roared and stamped as they consumed Pelsaert's food and wine. If they couldn't seize the ship, then they'd load one of the small boats with Company silver and leg it. Let the others fend for themselves, eh!

Jeronimus Cornelisz, undermerchant, sat with them, watching the looting through narrowed eyes. Let them shout—the mutiny has been his, but now it was literally on the rocks. He needed another plan.

He thought about it on board the *Batavia* for ten days, while his fellow-plotters, the drunks and half the scum of the Amsterdam back-ways took to the water as the ship broke up. When he finally paddled himself ashore on a piece of wreckage, he was astounded to find that he was the senior Company official on the little two-acre island.

Pelsaert? "Gone," said Lance Corporal Jacop Pietersz succinctly, jerking a thumb over his shoulder. "Sneaked away, he did, six night ago. Fifty of 'em took the sloop an' a yawl. Said they was goin' to look for water—I don't think! An' your precious captain went, too."

Jacobsz—so he'd run out, had he? Cornelisz took stock. There were some 170 survivors on the island. Of those who had not sailed away, some had already died of thirst before the rains came. Others had died of too much water—they had been drowned trying to swim ashore from the wreck. The undermerchant could count, perhaps, on twenty of the remainder.

The situation was not that bad. Flotsam from the *Batavia* had been blown ashore: sails for tent-making; timber for boat or raft-building; and best of all, supplies.

But one serious note intruded. News of the intended mutiny had leaked out, although just who was behind it

remained a secret. That was bad. Dead men tell no tales, said Cornelisz to himself. And they don't eat our precious supplies either!

A scheme was forming in his head and it depended on the acceptance of his authority by the soldiers. When the crew of one of the crude home-made boats reported to him that a larger island nearby was devoid of water, the undermerchant struck.

Calling Weibbe Hayes, the soldier, Cornelisz told him: "You see the high island over there? My men tell me it is well watered. If you and the other soldiers were to take some empty barrels across and fill them for us . . ."

It worked. The loyal soldiers were dispatched in a boat, leaving their cumbersome muskets behind. The undermerchant's next move was to divide the survivors among their own island and two others not far away. "Less overcrowding," he explained seriously. That worked too.

Then the killing began . . .

By ones and twos, by individuals and whole families, by respected citizens and babes-in-arms, the ghastly slaughter spread. No one could stand in the way of Jeronimus Cornelisz and his murderers-by-night.

Only a few were allowed to survive, either as servants for the mutineers or as their concubines. Some saved their skins by joining the murdering band. It was a temporary expedient, as they would find out later.

With one problem solved, Cornelisz found another one cropping up. Weibbe Hayes and his men had found water. Undeterred by the lack of it on the first island they had been landed on, they had waded to another across mud flats at low tide and there had lit a fire to signal their success, and as a request to be taken off the island. No boat had gone to them.

It was not only water that the soldiers found. There was food in abundance. Their special delicacy was "cats" —small wallaby-like creatures "with as pleasant a taste as I have ever come across," as one of their number was later to report.

Soon they were to learn with mounting horror of the slaughter that was taking place under the leadership of Jeronimus Cornelisz, when the first of a handful of ref-





ugees struggled ashore on makeshift rafts to tell incredible tales of swinging clubs and cutlasses, of throats slit from ear to ear and of blood staining the coral sand an everlasting red.

The soldiers cursed their folly at allowing themselves to be parted from their weapons, but it was Weibbe Hayes who rallied them and set them to make the best defenses they could from the materials at hand. It was obvious to him that the undermerchant and his ghastly crew would attack at the earliest opportunity.

The mutineers meanwhile, were loudly confident—what were a few soldiers without muskets? This they found out when, full of brandy and bravado, they attempted a landing on Weibbe Hayes' island.

Up from their boat they came, roaring and laughing in the finery they had looted from the *Batavia,* to fall back in sudden dismay as a hail of boulders rained down on their heads from a low cliff that barred their way.

Unnerved by this display of courage, cowed by the sight of Company soldiers grimly advancing with home-made pikes and clubs, the mutineers clambered hastily back into their boat and retreated ignominously.

Back on their home ground, they bolstered their confidence by swearing an oath of allegiance to each other and to Cornelisz. If they broke it (they vowed) they would be "the Devil's Own." But for that title they were already more than qualified.

A month later, they tried to do by cunning what they had failed to achieve by force. The plan was to buy the small boat which a refugee had stolen while escaping, using as currency the cloth and wine which they calculated the soldiers would willingly receive.

Again they reckoned without Weibbe Hayes. Cornelisz made the mistake of acting as his own emissary, only to find that he was pounced upon and captured.

For the mutineers it was now or never. On September 17 came the final battle. Weibbe Hayes and his men fought with desperation, but neither numbers nor muskets were on their side.

Then, as they crouched panting, waiting for the final

and overwhelming assault, came a strangled voice: "Ship ho!" It was Pelsaert with the *Sardam.*

No mercy had been shown by the degenerate mob who were the Devil's Own; little was shown to them. On October 2, 1629, under grey clouds, they cut off the hands of Jeronimus Cornelisz and hanged him.

He was lucky. Those whom Pelsaert took back to Batavia died a slower death at the hands of the servants of the High and Mighty Seventeen.

Such a ferocious, inhuman campaign does not die away easily in the minds of men, and for generations the Alhobros Islands were taboo to the aboriginal tribes of Australia. For to them, the "flaming star of death" hung over the small archipeligo. And it guided the spectre of the *Batavia* back to an eternal doom.

Many men were to claim to having seen the ghost ship, just as Charley Moon did that evening in 1932, and like Charley, they were all terrified by the sight. A few days later, a frightened-faced fisherman landed at a settlement in the Northern Territories and none would believe his incredible experience. None, that is, except the "abos."

Many of the sceptics, however, had cause to wonder just how much truth there was in Charley Moon's tale within the week. For one calm morning, after a peaceful night, Charley's boat was discovered floating upside down in the bay. Charley's body wasn't discovered for many months—and when it was, it must have made an amazing journey of over 100 miles. All the way to the Alhobros Islands.

## FRIENDS FROM "ANOTHER WORLD"

Whether we like it or not, there seems to be little doubt that spiritualism has become practically a religion in its own right. There seems little doubt, too, that it is here to stay—unless somebody can prove once and for all that the human soul doesn't exist.

Perhaps the man who did most to publicize the powers





of this uncanny faith was that incredible medium, Robert James Lees. Even as a child, there was more than sufficient evidence to prove that he possessed powers that were unique. Quite apart from his prowess as a medium, Lees demonstrated time and time again—in stringent laboratory conditions—that he was also a remarkable clairvoyant. It was probably this ability that was to lead to his greatest fame.

It was in his role as a medium, that he received spirit messages from Prince Albert, Consort to Queen Victoria, after Albert's death. As a result of this, he was frequently called to the court to comfort the bereaved Queen.

Lees was born at Hinckley, Leicestershire, on August 12, 1849. It soon became evident, in his earliest infancy, that he possessed remarkable psychic powers. This early indication was borne out when, in later life, he became world-famous for his extraordinary psychic investigations and experiences.

As a young man his fascination for spiritual and psychic phenomena prompted him to take an interest in spiritualism, but this was a brief phase in his life, and he later disassociated himself after receiving an unequivocable instruction from his spirit guide and teacher.

Until old age and ill-health intervened, Lees was a man of action. His energy seemed unlimited, and his enthusiasm for doing good work and helping the less fortunate unbounded.

His early psychic development took place in Birmingham where he worked for many years. Later, for seventeen years, he worked in London among the slum dwellers. One of his most treasured mementoes was a Bible bought especially as a gift for him by a group of prostitutes when he had tried to help.

Lees was almost entirely self-educated and the great driving force which made him extraordinary, was his unfaltering belief in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He believed that such unshakable faith would carry him through any and every crisis. His life-long preoccupation with the Bible has to be kept in mind when it is learned what later happened; when it is known what amazing and truly fantastic psychic experiences

this man had—and how a great teacher from the spirit world contacted him.

Perhaps inevitably Lees's life was a long catalogue of suffering and trials. He was often persecuted by those who differed from him. He was deserted by friends when trouble came.

He began his career as a trance medium in the spiritualist movement in Birmingham, but he withdrew when his spirit guide warned him that promiscuous seance work was making him unfit for some special work he had to do. Soon after this, the old psychic powers he had already experienced returned and new psychic phenomena were unfolded to him.

He had great and astounding healing powers of a psychic nature, and with his great healing gift he comforted countless broken hearts and saved countless lives. He claimed to have experienced visions beyond the capabilities of ordinary humans in which he saw great truth *and beheld glimpses of future events!*

The most astonishing of these visions, which enabled Lees to see events that were going to happen long before they did, were connected with the spate of brutal murders perpetrated by the multi-murderer who came to be known as "Jack the Ripper" and who, for a long time, terrorised the citizens of London and baffled the police. Many believe that through visions, Lees *did* solve the mystery of these killings and that he led the police to the maniac murderer.

The Ripper, one of the most notorious murderers in criminal history, first appeared in London's East End in 1888 and committed at least seven murders. All his victims were prostitutes. All but one had their throats cut and most were viciously mutilated. Once Jack the Ripper sent a grisly memento of one of his foul crimes to the police—a female kidney. He wrote messages to the police on walls near the scenes of his crimes, in chalk, and sometimes in the blood of his victims. Once he sent a letter to the police boasting about his murders and telling the police that before he was through he intended killing at least another sixteen street women.

According to official records, the case of The Ripper, who once promised the police in a letter that he would





give himself up when he had fulfilled his mission of murder, was never solved. The killer did not give himself up and he supposedly disappeared as mysteriously as he had come upon the London scene. But a great many people believe that Lees solved the mystery, that he traced the killer and that, for some reason, this was officially hushed-up.

But, judge for yourself . . . the first two murders had taken place. Both killings took place in one of the most sordid spots of Victorian London, Whitechapel, where prostitutes were beaten and left unconscious almost every night. Emma Elizabeth Smith, the first victim, lived for 24 hours after The Ripper's attack upon her, but then died in the London Hospital. She was able to tell police she had been followed, then robbed and beaten. The second victim, Martha Tabram, had her throat cut and there were thirty-nine other knife wounds in her body.

It was soon after these two murders that Robert James Lees, in the quiet of his own home, had a strange vision in which he was convinced he saw the *third* Ripper Murder before it actually happened!

Certain that his vision was a warning that the maniac killer would soon murder and mutilate a third victim, Lees wrote to Scotland Yard and told them of his vision. His letter was ignored. At least, he did not receive a reply from Soctland Yard. But a few days later the killer struck again and a third victim fell to the knife of Jack the Ripper. This time it was Annie Chapman, whose badly carved-up body was found in the *exact spot* that Lees had described in his letter. The murder had taken place exactly as Lees had seen it in his strange vision—and on precisely the same spot.

Shortly afterwards, Lees, sitting in his study, had another vision in which he saw a man and woman walking "down the length of a main street." He wrote to Scotland Yard again, more convinced than ever that his visions were connected with the mystery-killer, and in his letter he described the vision in detail:

"I seemed to follow the man and the woman with my mind's eye. I saw them enter a narrow court. There was

a gin palace near, ablaze with light. I saw them enter a dark corner. The woman was half-drunk.

"The man was perfectly sober and dressed in a dark suit of Scotch tweed. He was carrying a light overcoat over his arm and he was wearing a light felt hat. His eyes were bright blue and they glimmered. He threw the light coat gently onto the ground, laid his cane on it and put one hand over the woman's mouth . . .

"Then he drew a thin, six-inch-long knife from his inside vest pocket and cut the woman's throat.

"Then, putting on his overcoat, he buttoned it up to hide his bloodstained shirt-front and walked away calmly."

That Lees should have foreseen, in a vision, this next murder in such grim and stark detail is astonishing enough. That the next murder took place exactly as the vision had foretold it, is even more astounding.

The fifth murder—that of "Long Liz"—Elizabeth Stride—was committed in a narrow court, the entrance to which was via two large wooden gates. In every detail, the murder and the spot where it took place agreed with Robert James Lees's vision.

Another victim died, Catherine Eddowes, and then came a further letter from Jack the Ripper to the police boasting that they would soon hear about "his work" again. It was at this time that Lees came into the picture once more in a startling and dramatic manner.

He was having supper with friends one evening when, suddenly and without warning, he doubled over as though taken with cramp. But it was not cramp that ailed Lees—he was in the throes of another vision. To the astonishment of his companions he screamed "Jack the Ripper! He's doing murder again!"

When he recovered he was rushed immediately along to Scotland Yard where he told the police of his sudden strange vision. The three men were still at Scotland Yard when a report came in to say that another victim, a woman called Mary Jane Kelly, had just been found in a dark alley.

On this occasion, Lees and his companions went to the scene of the crime along with the detectives. When the party was drawing near to the spot where the





body lay, Lees stopped in his tracks and cried out hoarsely: "Take a look in the angle of the wall!"

The spot on the wall he indicated was one that none of them could see at that time, so there was no possible way Lees could have known—by ordinary earthly methods—what would be found there. But the police found that the killer had scrawled words on the wall in chalk—*"Seventeen—Jack The Ripper."*

Impressed by Lees's uncanny powers, in spite of their original and natural scepticism, the police assigned an inspector and two other police officers to accompany him when he offered to try to use his clairvoyant ability to locate Jack the Ripper.

The object of this psychic experiment was for Lees to try to find the place where the killer might be hiding. It was an appropriate time to carry out such an experiment. They walked through the streets until four o'clock in the morning, when suddenly, outside the gate of a mansion in the West End of London, Lees halted. Dramatically, he raised his arm and pointed straight at an upstairs window in the house from which a dim light shone. "That is where you will find your murderer," he exclaimed. "He is in that room!"

What followed then is significant, despite the fact that later official action failed to confirm that Jack the Ripper had finally been trapped and caught.

The police inspector, staring at this particular house, and then at the confident Lees, was aghast. He knew that it was the home of a very famous surgeon—a man who was related to the Royal Family! The idea that a pathological killer could be hiding there shocked him. But he had his instructions, and the police officers hammering on the front door quickly roused the household. They were subsequently admitted to the house where the inspector spoke to the surgeon's wife. It is notable than the doctor's wife admitted to the police inspector, Lees, and the others, that at the times when all the known murders had been committed, her husband had been out of the house. She also told them that her husband had often behaved violently towards her, threatening her; moreover, she concluded, she was convinced that he was insane!

The police inspector then interviewed the surgeon, a tall, very dignified man with vivid blue eyes. He confessed that often he had returned to his home quite unable to recall where he had been or how he had spent the time he was away from the house. Perhaps the most significant confession of all was when the surgeon admitted that on two occasions he had found himself at home, sitting in a chair, as though just aroused out of a stupor, with his shirt-front covered in blood or his face scratched!

The house was thoroughly searched and the police found a tweed suit, a soft felt hat and a light overcoat exactly like those Lees had described having seen in his visions! This might appear to have been conclusive evidence—ample proof that Lees and his fantastic psychic powers had succeeded in tracking down and finding the notorious Ripper. Indeed, it seemed it was evidence enough to convince the surgeon himself, whatever the police may have thought about it. For when confronted with the clothing *he* was convinced that he was guilty—that he was some kind of Jekyll and Hyde —two persons, the normally brilliant and humane surgeon the world knew him to be, and the abnormal monster that had terrorised all London.

Thus convinced, the surgeon pleaded that: "I cannot live with a monster—you must kill me."

What followed leaves much room for conjecture and doubt. It was never officially declared that Jack the Ripper had been caught. Many believe the whole thing was deliberately hushed-up. The surgeon was declared a dangerous lunatic and was sent to an asylum.

In the face of this official silence, one can only guess at the truth. But it is also true that when Lees stopped outside the surgeon's home before crying out to the police in the street that here lived the man they were hunting, in a greatly distressed and agitated state, he was able, before any of them entered the house, to describe accurately and in great detail, the interior of the house, its furnishings and furniture, and the entire contents. He had never been in the house before, so there was no way he could have known beforehand the facts he was able to reveal.





Astonishing though this may be, however, the Jack the Ripper incident was but one of the many astounding things that the remarkable Lees achieved in his lifetime.

Lees received spirit messages from Prince Albert in the late sixties of the last century. As might be expected, when it was brought to Queen Victoria's notice that these spirit messages had been received from her late husband and Consort Albert, she was delighted. It was following this revelation that a long series of séances ensued at the palace and Lees was summoned to court by the Queen on many occasions.

Her Majesty wanted Lees to be in close attendance upon her all the time, but this the spirit guide would not permit. It was this guide who suggested, through Lees, another medium closer to the Queen who could help her to maintain close spirit contact with her late husband. The man suggested was John Brown, the son of one of Victoria's gillies in Scotland. The recorded history of the Queen's close association with John Brown arouse conjecture for some time but the real reason for his closeness to Victoria was that Brown was the "go-between" for the Queen and her late husband.

While expressly discouraging Lees from devoting his medium's powers to the fulltime services of the Queen, her own spirit guide did promise her, in a message, that if at any time her own medium was not available to help her, then temporarily, Lees would be permitted to stand-in for Brown. And on many occasions he did.

It is typical of the kind of man he was that Lees never, at any time, divulged anything concerning what took place when he was at the palace with the Queen, or what went on at any of the séances at which he acted as "Royal medium."

For a number of years at least, because of his psychic services to the Crown and because of his numerous good and unselfish works among the less-fortunate, Robert James Lees was given a Government pension, reputed to have been around £7,500 a year.

It was perhaps his remarkable trilogy prompted and dictated by a spirit guide often referred to by Lees as one of the angels—which underlined his unique qualities as a medium extraordinary. These books on the ex-

periences of a soul after death, make a purely earthly claim to fame pale into insignificance.

How did they come to be written? This is explained at length by Lees himself, exactly as it happened, with no attempt being made to pander to any of the earthly test-requirements of sceptics.

One day Lees was working in his study. There was no pre-warning of the astounding thing that was to happen. Already Lees had ample proof of his psychic powers and already he had made contact with and been helped by what he called his "guide and friend on the other side."

It had become necessary, Lees explained, because of the important nature of the work, and it had been decided by his friends in the spirit world that *he* must do, for his spirit guide to make even closer contact with Lees and that was what appeared to happen.

The spirit guide materialised and so developed until he assumed solid shape. This was the spirit being called Myhanene. It talked to Lees in a way a fellow human would have done and was always "careful to avoid appearing in a way that might appear sensational . . ."

Later spirits developed from the first, shadowy forms to increasing density until Lees was able to touch them, speak to them, and hear the whisper of musical voices. Some of Lee's earthly friends began to meet together to exchange conversation with these "spirit visitors." In time the "spirit visitors" came to visit Lees and were so solid and real as to be quite indistinguishable from humans. They were even able to sit in his study for hours "and use my books!"

It was the interest and genuine belief which was developed in Lees's earthly friends, who came to know these "friends from beyond," that finally prompted the suggestion that a book should be written and published so that the truth might be spread.

The spirit guide, Myhanene, was not enthusiastic about this at first, but eventually agreed and another of the spirit guides materialised in daylight in Lee's study one day to inform the latter that he could become the spirit guide's amanuensis and take down from him verbally an account of his experiences after his transition.





The "spirit visitors" had decided that Lees could write a book about a subject who had experienced death—and follow his experiences after death. These would be dictated by the spirit friends and guides, and help would be given with the account by others who had been involved with the subject at some stage.

Thus was the famous trilogy born, written by Lees, dictated to him by spirit friends. The subject chosen whose after-death experiences were to be written down was one called Aphraar, discovered by Myhanene. Aphraar had suffered on Earth, his life being clouded from infancy by an ardent yearning for maternal love he had never known.

So that his story would not be weakened by exaggeration or misinterpretation due to the surprises he would meet on the way, it was necessary that it be revised by one who had previously met with a similar experience, and had since given help to others who had been similarly circumstanced. Such a one was readily available to help with the work—Cynthus.

The story was received in this way. At meetings with his earthly friends and his friends from beyond, Lees acted as the recorder. Seldom were there less than four "writing sessions." Aphraar would describe his experience in his own words, Lees writing as he dictated. Now and then Cynthus would interrupt to ask a question, and occasionally one of the spirt friends who had figured in the incident would offer a correction to something stated. Thus the first draft was written, more or less in Aphraar's own words as he recollected it—until Cynthus decided a suitable point had been reached to end the first planned book.

At this stage the work was no more than a bald, disjointed and inanimate outline from which Cynthus was able to put movement into the story by collaborating with others who had played a part. He put himself in the background to give color and perspective to the story. Thus was born the first of the trilogy *Through The Mists.* The narrative of Aphraar was later continued in a second book *The Life Elysian,* and the third stage appeared titled *The Gate of Heaven.*

The first of the books about Aphraar's experience

brought in such a deluge of earthly correspondence that other books were written by Lees, always prompted and helped by his spirit friends and guides. His books included *The Heretic, The Car of Phoebus* and *The Astral Bridegroom.* The trilogy was written under the general title of *Leaves From The Autobiography Of A Soul.*

Aphraar, whose story was told by Lees in these books, lost his physical body in an accident, and the first thing he recalled after death was "waking up and finding himself lying upon a grassy bank in an enchanted land, where he was met at once by a Helper."

To obtain a full and complete picture of Lees, his books must be read; but is possible to shed glimpses of light on the lessons Lees learned from his contacts with his spirit friends as well as what Lees learned about life after death, and the laws that never change. For instance, we may learn how Aphraar was helped on the other side by others with greater experience in psychic realms. Aphraar's spirit teacher did not pander to "the arrogances and stupidities of formal and organised religion, but he did treat these with respect insofar as their usefulness extended."

Lees received many such messages which gave rich accounts of actual cases that showed the unswerving nature of the law that those who sin must suffer, and gave evidence of the wisdom and unfailing readiness of the great Army of Servers on the other side to help all who seek to mend their ways.

Although he had written one book dealing with reincarnation, later Lees had this to say about the subject: "the theory of reincarnation is one of the devices invented by priests to terrify men and women into subjection. It could not possibly be introduced into the natural order of existence without reducing the whole system to chaos." This quote came, of course, from one of Lees's spirit friends.

So much for the man when he was alive. Robert James Lees died on Sunday, January 11, 1931. There is evidence that this man, one of the most astonishing psychic experts who ever lived, "crossed over" and went to join his spirit friends in the final transition. The evi-





dence? Robert James Lees's daughter, Eva Lees, told how in July, 1947, her father's spirit contacted her and instructed her to give a £25 check to delegates from overseas to a spiritualists' conference at Bournemouth—which she did.

There seems to be no doubt that the experience of psychic investigator Robert James Lees was unique. There is no doubt either, that Lees helped many people, mended many broken hearts, and saved lives.

So there is the picture of a man who could lay claim to greatness in the sphere of psychic matters, a man who appeared to have had unique experiences, who met spirits from the life beyond death in solid and materialised form, and who learned from much of which he recorded for others to read. Not all he accomplished in his life could be included in a short article of this nature; not all his many amazing psychic experiences can be written about. Much of what he did, the good he wrought, the comfort he brought to fellow human beings with the medium of his strange and remarkable psychic powers, has been left out. But enough has been said to establish, if nothing else, that if any man was remarkable —Robert James Lees in his lifetime *was.* And there are a great many who claim that he was, without a doubt, one of the most amazing psychic experts who ever lived.

## THE GHOST THAT COUNTED OUT MURDER

Ten people in a livingroom listened, spellbound, as an incredible story was revealed . . . a story of brutal, premeditated murder. But the source of information was a spirit!

It all began in 1847, when a Canadian farmer named John Fox moved to Wayne County with his family and, until their new home was built, rented a house in the village of Hydesville. It was a plain frame house, like most of the others in the main street and although Fox heard rumors that the house was haunted, he dismissed

the idea of ghosts like the devout Methodist that he was.

But shortly after Mr. and Mrs. Fox. and their two daughters moved in, they began to hear rustlings and tappings which could not be attributed to rats, birds or mice; and as the weeks passed, the sounds grew stronger. They also began to hear noises like heavy footsteps, but no amount of searching revealed any explanation. The Foxes had moved in on December 10 and by the following March the house was shaking with the noises. Tables and chairs began to move of their own accord and loud raps sounded on the walls. Sleep was almost impossible and John Fox began to dread nightfall. Having brought up six children, he had known sleepless nights before, but nothing like this.

The strain was beginning to tell. He did not mention the noises to their neighbours, for fear of being laughed at. Then his son, David, employed on a farm a few miles away, came to spend the day with them. When they told David rather hesitantly about the noises, he treated it as a huge joke. But when he left, the family decided to have an early night, hoping perhaps they could snatch some sleep before the noises began.

But scarcely had the girls been tucked in when the sounds started up, louder than ever. Despairingly, Fox went around the doors and window sashes, hoping to find some logical explanation, though he had been through this routine hundreds of times before without success in the last few weeks. The younger daughter, Catherine, aged eight, noticed that when her father shook the sashes to see if they were secure, the raps acted like an echo. Excitedly, she called out, "Mister—do as I do!" and clapped her hands four times quickly. Immediately there came a reply—*four knocks in rapid succession!*

Then she went through a pantomime of snapping her fingers silently five times slowly. Again came five slow raps. Not in the least frightened, and treating it like a new game, she cried: "Look, Mama—it can see as well as hear. Tomorrow is April Fool's Day. Someone is trying to scare us!" Mrs. Fox was petrified, but intrigued, so she called out "Count ten." And ten knocks thudded against the wall.





Next she began to ask questions which could be answered in numbers. "How old is my daughter, Margaretta?" "How old is Catherine?" The answers came quickly and correctly. Then she asked "How many children do I have?" The answer was unmistakable. One-two-three-four-five-six-seven. Mrs. Fox paused, puzzled. This was the first mistake the invisible presence had made. Then a thought struck her, so she rephrased the question: "How many children have I *living*?"

This time the answer was six. Somehow the ghost knew her second child had died, aged three, of diptheria.

After that, James Fox took a hand in the questioning of this unseen oracle.

"If you are a man making these noises, knock twice for yes." There was a silence. "Are you a spirit?" For a reply came two thumps so loud and violent that the house shook.

"Will the noises continue if other people are present?" Two knocks, again.

Mrs. Fox ran out to fetch some neighbors to witness these amazing events and she came back with four women and two men who were joking and in excellent spirits. They were confident they could show up the noises for what they must be—some sort of practical joke.

The first woman asked, "What is my age?" and was disconcerted to find her question answered by forty-three distinct raps. Each neighbor asked this question in turn and afterwards no one complained that the wrong answer had been given. The atmosphere in the living-room had changed abruptly. Their mood became puzzled, uneasy.

One of the neighbours, William Duesler, who at one time had lived in this house with his father, took charge, and he had enough presence of mind to begin a systematic questioning of the invisible spirit. He asked if he or his father had been responsible for any injury the spirit had suffered. One rap indicated no. Then, by the slow and laborious system of using two raps for yes, one rap for no, and giving each letter of the alphabet a value from one to twenty-six, Duesler began to extract a story. It was a sensational story told in the most bizarre

circumstances, in the presence of the Fox family and a handful of awestruck neighbors.

According to the story, the spirit's name was Charles Rosen, who had been murdered when his throat was slit with a knife. The motive had been robbery . . . five hundred dollars and some valuables he carried had been stolen. His body had been dragged into the cellar and buried there. Rosen said he had been 31 years old, had five children, but his wife was dead.

Once the story had sunk in, Duesler fetched another neighbor, Artemus Hyde. In his presence, the questions were repeated, getting the same answers. The process was gone through yet again for the benefit of another sceptical neighbor who looked in later.

The story created a tremendous uproar. The following day, Saturday, April 1, the house was packed with scores of sightseers who had heard the news and had come to watch and wonder.

John Fox and a band of volunteers began digging in the cellar. After a spade's depth, however, they struck water. The houses were low-lying and spring rains had started. Further digging was postponed until the cellar had dried out.

One point puzzled them. *Who* was Frank Rosen? No one in Hydesville had heard the name; indeed, there was no report of a man missing from any part of Wayne County.

To keep the record straight, Mr. and Mrs. Fox and six of the neighbors wrote out sworn affidavits stating the facts. The nightly bumps and thuds continued and were heard by dozens of people from Hydesville and nearby Rochester.

Soon afterwards came another astonishing development. A young girl named Lucretia Pulver came forward with information she felt might throw light on the mystery. Four years earlier, she had been maid-of-all-work for a Mr. and Mrs. Bell, who had then lived in the house the Foxes occupied. One day, a travelling peddler came to their door, a smart-looking man of about thirty, rather flashily dressed in a black frock coat, patterned waistcoat, and light trousers. She got the impression that Mrs. Bell had known him previously. At





any rate, the peddler was invited to spend the night. There was some luggage—a carpet bag and a tin trunk containing his samples.

Within an hour of the peddler's arrival, Mrs. Bell told Lucretia out of the blue that she couldn't afford to keep on employing her. As Mrs. Bell was driving to Rochester that evening, she suggested Lucretia should pack at once and go with her. Before she left, however, Lucretia picked out a length of pretty dress material from the peddler's trunk. She arranged for him to leave the cloth next day at her father's house, which was on his route. Then Lucretia and Mrs. Bell drove away, leaving the two men in the house by themselves. Next day, the peddler failed to make the promised delivery of the dress material. And he was never seen or heard of again—alive.

A few days later, Lucretia was astonished to get a message from Mrs. Bell asking her to start work again. Mrs. Bell spent that day and the next altering some jackets for Mr. Bell which were much too big for him. Lucretia also happened to notice many new articles in the house which she recalled seeing in the peddler's tin trunk. It struck her that, for someone who had pleaded poverty only a few days earlier, Mrs. Bell must have spent a lot of money on peddler's knick-knacks.

Lucretia, who slept in the bedroom occupied by the Fox girls, began to notice a definite tapping sound which seemed to come from the floor under her bed. This had also been the room given to the peddler the night Lucretia went away.

One evening, when the Bells were out of town, Lucretia arranged for a girl friend and her brother to stay with her for company. During the night they all heard strange sounds like stealthy footsteps going from the bedroom to the kitchen, then down the cellar stairs. There were also muffled sounds from the cellar. To make it more uncanny and ensure a sleepless night, her brother's dog sat outside their window and howled all night. Next morning, there was no sign of a burglar or anything out of the ordinary.

A week later, when Lucretia was down in the large cellar for some lamp oil which was stored there, she

stumbled in a hole filled with soft earth and twisted her ankle. Hearing her scream, Bell came rushing down to find out what had happened. She asked him why the cellar had been dug up.

"Rat holes," Bell replied curtly. For several nights after that, Bell was busy in the cellar "filling up rat holes." He used earth and flat stones which he brought in after dark.

Mrs. Bell had never mentioned the eerie after-dark noises to Lucretia, but she told Mrs. Pulver, Lucretia's mother, about them. All night long, Mrs. Bell said, she could hear a man walking about the house, yet there was never anyone there. Mrs. Pulver remarked to Lucretia that Mrs. Bell appeared to be under some severe strain, as well as lack of sleep. Shortly afterwards, the Bells left the district and Lucretia went to another position in Rochester.

The next occupants of the house, a Mr. and Mrs. Weekman, were also conscious of strange noises in the cellar and the sound of nocturnal footsteps. In addition, Weekman often went to the door in answer to knocking, but when he opened it, no one was ever there. Mrs. Weekman said she once saw a strange man in the bedroom next to the kitchen while she was busy there. The only way to the bedroom was through the kitchen and she was certain no one had passed her. She described him as wearing a black frock coat, a fancy vest and pale trousers, but when she went to talk to him, he vanished. The Weekmans only stayed there for five weeks . . . before leaving suddenly.

Lucretia's evidence set tongues wagging and public interest in the case redoubled. Mr. Bell, who had been traced to Lyon, New York, angrily denied any knowledge of a murder and claimed Lucretia's version of the events of four years ago was a pack of lies. He also supplied references as to his character signed by forty-four prominent citizens of Lyon.

Of course, there was no evidence against Bell, which would stand up in a court of law, because for a start, there was no body. Fox had dug up the cellar in June when the ground was dry. After digging several feet down and sifting the soil, the only suspicious pieces of





evidence were some strands of hair, a few fragments of bone, lumps of charcoal and the remains of a quantity of quicklime. A doctor verified that the pieces of bone were part of a human skull and the hair was also human. But for those who believed the version revealed by the knockings, the evidence was disappointingly meager.

Although the noises continued worse than ever, interest in the case waned, except in Rochester, where the Foxes had come to live. The town was evenly divided as to whether they were saints or rogues.

The Hydesville affair might have slipped into oblivion but for a small news item which appeared in the Boston "Journal" on November 23, 1904. It told of some children who had been playing in the cellar of an old, deserted house in Hydesville, when the east wall of the cellar collapsed on one of them. The workmen, who came to rescue the child, discovered that the wall which had fallen down as a false partition. There was a space between it and the original cellar foundation . . . and in there they found the headless skeleton of a man, and beside it, a tin trunk—the kind peddlers were known to have used to carry their smaples.

## HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN GHOSTS—BUT . . .

There are many people who are only too eager to deny in public, at least, all belief in the supernatural. Put up an argument and—no matter how objective your facts may be—they still refuse to accept them. This is the sort of situation psychic investigators frequently come up against. It has happened to me on several occasions, but the most memorable instance of this took place about five years ago, when I was on a lecture tour of Canada. The driving force behind the lectures was a close friend who has now moved into television production in Hollywood.

I remember it was a bitterly cold January evening and the audience in Montreal had been more sceptical than

usual about accepting the facts of psychical phenomena —especially the reports of extra sensory perception. My friend, whom I shall call John Armstrong, hadn't taken part in any of the discussions. For once, he had been unusually silent.

Later, as we were driving along St. Catherine Street, I leaned back in the cab and closed my eyes. I could hear John sucking on his pipe: smell the familiar aromatic aroma of his tobacco. Suddenly, he said: "Well, *I'm* not too sure whether I believe in ghosts, myself. I mean, I've never *seen* one, *but* . . ."

It was this pause that made me stare. He looked embarrassed, obviously wishing he hadn't brought up the subject, so I didn't pursue the matter. I had the feeling that he would, in his own good time, refer to it again. And he did. Later that very evening, as we sat in the dining room of the Mount Royal Hotel, he led up to it again, taking a rather devious route.

Appropriately enough, John began by talking about television and films. At that time his interest in them was just beginning to make him think of seeking a career in the industry. A few days later, I had him tell it to me again, and I tape-recorded it. Because it was such a personal experience, it can only be told in his own words:

"Sometimes when I watch a repeat of an old film on television, I find myself being more critical of the acting than the story content itself, wondering why I thought it had been so marvellous when I originally saw it in the cinema.

"I saw one of these old films recently, but it was with a sad heart that I remembered the first time I'd seen it sixteen years ago. At that time my father, a pharmacist, had been slowly dying of cancer, with both my mother and myself taking turns to look after him. The illness reached the point of no return during my school holiday of 1952, so I looked after father during the day, while my mother looked after the business.

"A small divan had been moved into my father's room and I would lie on this during most of the day, reading, ready to help in any way I could.

"After a month of constantly being on call, plus the





added knowledge of my father's inevitable end, I began to show signs of a strain. Mother, of course, realised this and decided to close the shop one day in July and give me the chance to go out with some of my school friends.

"I felt guilty at leaving my father. Although my mother was a much better nurse to him, I had been feeling very possessive as I knew his time was short. I telephoned two of my friends and told them I was able to go out for the afternoon and we arranged to see a film at the local cinema. The sense of relief and excitement I suddenly felt, walking down the street would be hard to describe. For one whole afternoon I had no responsibilities!

"Both boys were waiting outside the cinema for me and I had felt so elated at my unexpected holiday, that I hadn't even bothered to notice the film title. To this day I remember sitting in the stalls and thinking that this was the first time I'd been to the cinema without knowing what was being shown.

"The supporting programme was the usual. The news, a few adverts, and a travelogue. Then the main feature started with the title followed by an old-type sailing ship in the background, the credits began to roll with all the artists' names, make up, wardrobe, director and producer. Impatiently I waited for these to finish, as I always preferred to see the credits at the end of the film —and still do. The final name showed on the screen and I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Then nothing. For a good five minutes—aware of a silence all about me I watched a blank screen. I turned to my nearest friend and whispered: "What's wrong? Has the projector failed?" He didn't reply, but nudged me to keep quiet, for they were both watching the screen. Fortunately, the film re-started and I was launched headlong into the wonders of the Spanish Main and the acrobatic genius of the star. When it was all over, I was so excited by the vigor of the action, plus the comedy business, I forgot all about the bad start, said good-bye to my friends and walked home with an energy I hadn't felt for a while.

"As I climbed the steep road leading to my home, a small girl who lived a few doors away from me came rushing up and with a strange, almost apologetic look, said quietly: "Your mother's been looking for you."

"Instinctively I knew something had gone wrong at home. I didn't allow myself to put what I felt into words, but as I quickened my pace and reached the point where I could see the house I knew the worst.

"In the windows of all the four rooms facing me, the blinds and curtains were closed. My father had died in my absense. I was told by the doctor who was still there, that my father had had a seizure around half-past three in the afternoon and had died almost five minutes later.

"Two days after the burial, I met the same boys I'd been to the cinema with, and after they'd said how sorry they were to hear about my father, to change the subject, they began to talk about the film we'd seen.

" 'It was all right,' I said, trying to contribute something to the conversation, 'Except for that breakdown at the beginning—when the screen went blank. They ought to get a new projector.'

"Both boys stared at each other—then assured me they hadn't noticed anything like that. They were certain that the film hadn't stopped once. Of course, I didn't believe them. I didn't think they were lying, either . . . it was possible that they hadn't noticed. Yet—the more I thought about the "breakdown"—the stranger it seemed. For both my friends had been *staring right at the cinema screen during the failure!*

"In those days, cinema projectors weren't the electronic wonders they are now, and although many cinemas had trouble with their devices, the cinema we had gone to that day had acquired a reputation that had grown into a joke as its equipment was all practically museum pieces.

"Still puzzled by that 'blank screen,' I was passing by the cinema a few days later and saw the manager leaving his car at the curb. When he recognised me, he paid his respects to my father. I noticed that the same





film was running—the matinee was timed for half-past three.

"When he noticed me looking at the boardings, the manager asked me if I would like to see the film. I replied that I had already done so . . . and then asked him about the projector. Had it broken down recently? He smiled and assured me that performance had been one hundred per cent efficient for almost two weeks, because they had managed to obtain new equipment."

John Armstrong finished his story. There was still an embarrassed look on his face, and I realised that I was probably the first person he had ever discussed it with. Obviously he expected me to give him some cut and dried answer . . . or laugh it off in disbelief. However, I didn't laugh—neither could I explain what had happened. Except possibly, for those few moments, there had been some communication between himself and his dying father.

## LAUGHTER IN THE ATTIC

Have you ever noticed the uncanny talent children seem to have for seeing and understanding far more than their elders? This was brought home to me very dramatically, exactly three years ago, when one of my colleagues, Richard Butler, and his family moved into an old, spacious Victorian house in Islington, North London. I said *dramatically* with very good reason, too. For what happened to his children proves that this talent can be a highly dangerous one.

Was it *just* imagination that sparked the whole business off with the Butler children? I think not. The circumstances were so extraordinary, that they could have had no way of knowing what had happened in that house many years before they were born.

I remember how fascinated Amanda and Paul had been with the new home their parents had obtained. After living in a rather cramped flat in Kensington,

the rambling Victorian house seemed like a paradise. It was an exciting house for children, a place where they could play hide-and-seek properly and there was even an attic. This was probably the most adventurous place in the house, as it was approached by a narrow, twisting staircase and once through the tiny doorway, the attic ran the entire length and breadth of the house. But more than this—it had accumulated the most intriguing collection of junk the Butlers' had ever seen.

Among the treasures they found a beautiful Victorian doll's house and then a rocking horse. Amanda who was nine, loved playing house, so she was thrilled when she found a dusty box full of hand-made doll's house furniture and little cloth dolls, stiffened with pipe-cleaners. There was a father doll, a mother doll, three child dolls, a baby, a nanny and two housemaids. Although her mother was busy sorting out the chaos which followed moving, and supervising the decorating of the main rooms downstairs, she was just as intrigued by this box. "How beautiful," she said. "What a lot of trouble people took to make toys in those days. All this furniture must have been carved by some little girl's father."

"Yes," said Amanda. "Selina was very lucky. I *know* her name was Selina, because it's written in all those old books up in the loft. *'This book belongs to Selina Mirabel Humphreys'* . . . and, mummy, she had three brothers, because all their books are up there, too."

"We could probably get a fortune for all that junk up there," said Richard, some time later. "With this craze for Victoriana at the moment. I must go and examine it when I've some free time."

Amanda looked very upset. "Oh, no, Daddy, *please* don't sell it. We want to play with it."

"If you want to play in the attic, it really should be cleaned out," said her mother. "It must be terribly dusty. I'll see to it this afternoon."

"No, Mummy," said Amanda quickly. "Paul and I can do it . . . I'll take up the broom and dustpan . . . we can easily do it."

"We want to have it as *our* private place," chipped in





Paul.

"Oh, well," said Richard, "I suppose it's a good idea. It'll save the other rooms being wrecked!"

During the next few weeks, the children spent all their time in the attic, and even wanted to take their supper up there. Their mother, Rosemary, was surprised when she found Amanda laying a tray for four, preparing to take it up to the loft one day.

"Have you got some friends with you?" she asked in amusement.

"Yes, Selina and Hubert are coming to tea," said Amanda and hurried up the stairs to the attic.

"Amazing imagination children have," Rosemary told Richard later that evening, when the children were in bed. "They had a supper party today and said Selina and Hubert were coming. They certainly made enough noise for four. There was giggling all afternoon, I could hear them romping around and playing on the rocking horse. But when I went up to call them at bedtime, they'd locked the door."

Richard hardly looked up from his paper. "It's perfectly normal at this age," he said. "All imaginative children invent playmates. I remember I used to have an 'invisible friend' called Bert. He was always waiting to play ludo with me when I was sent to bed for being naughty. I always won, of course!"

"I suppose it's almost essential to be able to escape from the adult world," said Rosemary. "An imaginary playmate can be so sympathetic and understanding when you're in trouble."

"Mummy, Selina is awfully pretty," said Amanda as she ate her cornflakes at breakfast the next morning. "Can I have my hair in ringlets like hers? She has some lovely clothes, too. Yesterday she was wearing a dress of white muslin, with tiny flowers on it."

"Yes, dear," replied Rosemary absentmindedly as she was opening her mail, which was mostly bills.

"I'm not sure about Hubert, thought," said Paul. "He can be quite rough at times. And he broke one of the doll's house chairs."

Richard looked up at them sternly. "Now, Paul. Don't carry this too far," he said. "It's all very well to

have make-believe friends, but when you start blaming *them* for damage you've caused, it's not so funny."

Amanda and Paul exchanged conspiratorial glances, as if they were shutting their parents out from some secret. The summer holidays went on, and the children seemed to spend all their time in the attic, where they made twice as much noise as before. They were always laughing.

One afternoon Rosemary went out to do some shopping for a few hours and when she came back the house was strangely quiet. "Amanda! Paul!" she called. There was no reply.

If they were in the attic, they would have heard her. She couldn't see them in the small back garden and imagined they must have gone round to the ice cream parlour, but when six o'clock came and there was still no sign of them, she began to worry.

"I can't find the children," she said to Richard. "I've been up to the attic, but the door's locked. They must have gone somewhere and . . . and taken the key with them."

Hours passed, they both became more and more worried. After a thorough search of the house and garden and a few phone calls to friends to see if the children had gone to visit, they finally contacted the police, who began to investigate the disappearances immediately.

Rosemary was in tears by then. "Where can they be?" she demanded. "They've never done this before. They've always played in the house . . . it's not *like* them to go wandering off."

"They're sure to be safe somewhere," said Richard. He was just as worried, but trying not to let his wife see it. So he mixed her a drink of hot milk and brandy, insisted she took it and said: "Go and get some sleep, we'll have some news from the police very soon, I'm sure."

Rosemary eventually dropped off to sleep, while Richard stayed downstairs reading, hoping the phone would ring. It was several hours later, when Rosemary was awakened from a stupor by a muffled knocking from the attic. It was a rhythmic knocking—like the rocking





of the old wooden horse. She put on her dressing gown and pattered downstairs to Richard.

"I think they're in the attic after all. Someone's playing with the rocking horse." She was trembling. It seemed so strange. Why should the children lock themselves up in there? It wasn't *like* them to be so disobedient.

Richard raced up the attic stairs, he tried the door—but it was still locked. Yet he could distinctly hear the rocking of the horse.

"Amanda! Paul! Open the door!" he shouted. "What do you think you're doing?" But there was no reply, none that was, except the rocking of the toy horse, so he put his shoulder to the door and forced it open. The attic was in darkness. He switched on the light and it was empty. There was only the rocking horse, rocking gently to and fro.

He shouted again for the children and then—to his relief—he heard a faint, weak voice from the shadows at the farthest end of the attic. "Daddy." It seemed to be coming from an enormous trunk, covered with dust and cobwebs, in the corner. He lifted the catch, heaved up the lid and there, inside, were the children. Paul was unconscious through lack of air, and Amanda was only half-conscious, when Richard hauled them out.

Amanda started to cry. "Daddy! We're not playing with them any more. Hubert shut us in here when we were playing. He's horrid." And she wept hysterically on her father's shoulder.

Rosemary carried Paul downstairs and they sent for their doctor, who came round immediately.

"You're lucky," he said, after examining the children. "Half an hour longer and that might have been the end. The air in that old trunk would have been used up, and they really would have suffocated. As it is, all they've had is a nasty fright."

Paul was conscious by then, and silent. He just sat there glowering. Finally he muttered, "Funny joke! I never liked that boy Hubert—I told Amanda that . . . and once he'd got us shut in even he couldn't get the lid up. He said he didn't care if we stayed there for ever . . ."

"Oh, but *Selina* tried to help," said Amanda, lifting an earnest tear-stained face to her parents. "I told her to fetch you and she said she'd make you come up, somehow. That's why she rode the rocking horse."

When they were safely tucked in bed and the pills were making them drowsy, the doctor accepted a drink downstairs in the drawing room.

"I just wonder," he said, "if someone told them that story about the family who lived here about fifty years ago . . . my grandfather was the doctor then and I remember him telling it to us. It made quite an impression on him.

"The family's name was Humphreys. There were four children, the two youngest used to play in the attic a lot—just like your two. But the boy Hubert quarrelled with his little sister, Selina, shut her in that trunk and left her there.

"She was found suffocated next day. He was only five so, of course, there was no question of murder. The family left the house a few weeks later."

And so, I might add, did my friends the Butlers.



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